

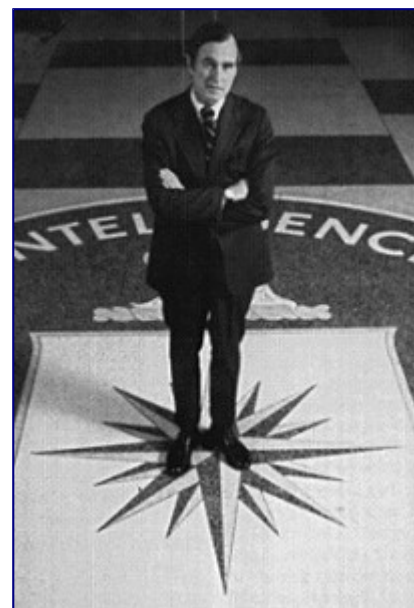
Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 1: Mr. George Bush Of The Central Intelligence Agency

By [Russ Baker](#)

Sep 16, 2013

*What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the **first** part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.*

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Poppy's Secret

When Joseph McBride came upon the document about George H. W. Bush's double life, he was not looking for it. It was 1985, and McBride, a former *Daily Variety* writer, was in the library of California State University San Bernardino, researching a book about the movie director Frank Capra. Like many good reporters, McBride took off on a "slight," if time-consuming, tangent – spending day after day poring over reels of microfilmed documents related to the FBI and the JFK assassination. McBride had been a volunteer on Kennedy's campaign, and since 1963 had been intrigued by the unanswered questions surrounding that most singular of American tragedies.

A particular memo caught his eye, and he leaned in for a closer look. Practically jumping off the screen was a memorandum from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, dated November 29, 1963. Under the subject heading "Assassination of President John F. Kennedy," Hoover reported that, on the day after JFK's murder, the bureau had provided two individuals with briefings. One was "Captain William Edwards of the Defense Intelligence Agency." The other: "Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency."

To:

Director
Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Department of State

[We have been] advised that the Department of State feels some misguided anti-Castro group might capitalize on the present situation and undertake an unauthorized raid against Cuba, believing that the assassination of President John F. Kennedy might herald a change in U.S. policy... [Our] sources know of no [such] plans... The substance of the foregoing information was orally furnished to Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency and Captain William Edwards of the Defense Intelligence

Agency.

McBride shook his head. George H. W. Bush? In the CIA in 1963? Dealing with Cubans and the JFK assassination? Could this be the same man who was now vice president of the United States? Even when Bush was named CIA director in 1976 amid much agency-bashing, his primary asset had been the fact that he was not a part of the agency during the coups, attempted coups, and murder plots in Iran, Cuba, Chile, and other hot spots about which embarrassing information was being disclosed every day in Senate hearings.

For CIA director Bush, there had been much damage to control. The decade from 1963 to 1973 had seen one confidence-shaking crisis after another. There was the Kennedy assassination and the dubious accounting of it by the Warren Commission. Then came the revelations of how the CIA had used private foundations to channel funds to organizations inside the United States, such as the National Student Association. Then came Watergate, with its penumbra of CIA operatives such as E. Howard Hunt and their shadowy misdoings. Americans were getting the sense of a kind of sanctioned underground organization, operating outside the law and yet protected by it. Then President Gerald Ford, who had ascended to that office when Richard Nixon resigned, fired William Colby, the director of the CIA, who was perceived by hard-liners as too accommodating to congressional investigators and would-be intelligence reformers.

Now Ford had named George H. W. Bush to take over the CIA. But Bush seemed wholly unqualified for such a position – especially at a time when the agency was under maximum scrutiny. He had been U.N. ambassador, Republican National Committee chairman, and the U.S. envoy to Beijing, where both Nixon and Henry Kissinger had regarded him as a lightweight and worked around him. What experience did he have in the world of intelligence and spying? How would he restore public confidence in a tarnished spy agency? No one seemed to know. Or did Gerald Ford realize something most others didn't?

Bush served at the CIA for one year, from early 1976 to early 1977. He worked quietly to reverse the Watergate-era reforms of CIA practices, moving as many operations as possible offshore and beyond accountability. Although a short stint, it nevertheless created an image problem in 1980 when Bush ran unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination against former California governor Ronald Reagan. Some critics warned of the dangerous precedent in elevating someone who had led the CIA, with its legacy of dark secrets and covert plots, blackmail and murder, to preside over the United States government.

“Must be another George Bush”

In 1985, when McBride found the FBI memo apparently relating to Bush's past, the reporter did not immediately follow up this curious lead. Bush was now a recently reelected vice president (a famously powerless position), and McBride himself was busy with other things. By 1988, however, the true identity of “Mr. George Bush of the CIA” took on new meaning, as George H. W. Bush prepared to assume his role as Reagan's heir to the presidency. Joe McBride decided to make the leap from entertainment reportage to politics. He picked up the phone and called the White House.

“May I speak with the vice president?” he asked

McBride had to settle for Stephen Hart, a vice presidential spokesman. Hart denied that his boss had been the man mentioned in the memo, quoting Bush directly. “I was in Houston, Texas, at the time and involved in the independent oil drilling business. And I was running for the Senate in late '63. I don't have any idea of what he's talking about.” Hart concluded with this suggestion: “Must be another George Bush.”

McBride found the response troubling – rather detailed for a ritual non-denial. It almost felt like a cover

story that Bush was a bit too eager to trot out. He returned to Hart with more questions for Bush:

- Did you do any work with or for the CIA prior to the time you became its director?
- If so, what was the nature of your relationship with the agency, and how long did it last?
- Did you receive a briefing by a member of the FBI on anti-Castro Cuban activities in the aftermath [of] the assassination of President Kennedy?

Within half an hour, Hart called him back. The spokesman now declared that, though he had *not* spoken with Bush, he would nevertheless answer the questions himself. Hart said that the answer to the first question was no, and, therefore, the other two were moot.

Undeterred, McBride called the CIA. A spokesman for the agency, Bill Devine, responded: "This is the first time I've ever heard this . . . I'll see what I can find out and call you back."

The following day, the PR man was tersely formal and opaque: "I can neither confirm nor deny." It was the standard response the agency gave when it dealt with its sources and methods. Could the agency reveal whether there had been another George Bush in the CIA? Devine replied: "Twenty-seven years ago? I doubt that very much. In any event, we have a standard policy of not confirming that anyone is involved in the CIA."

"Apparently" George *William* Bush

But it appears this standard policy was made to be broken. McBride's revelations appeared in the July 16, 1988, issue of the liberal magazine the *Nation*, under the headline "The Man Who Wasn't There, 'George Bush,' C.I.A. Operative." Shortly thereafter, CIA spokeswoman Sharron Basso told the Associated Press that the CIA believed that "the record should be clarified." She said that the FBI document "apparently" referred to a George *William* Bush who had worked in 1963 on the night shift at the Langley, Virginia, headquarters, and that "would have been the appropriate place to have received such an FBI report." George William Bush, she said, had left the CIA in 1964 to join the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Certainly, the article caused George H. W. Bush no major headaches. By the following month, he was triumphantly accepting the GOP's presidential nomination at its New Orleans convention, unencumbered by tough questions about his past.

CIA can't find "other" George Bush?

Meanwhile, the CIA's Basso told reporters that the agency had been unable to locate the "other" George Bush. The assertion was reported by several news outlets, with no comment about the irony of a vaunted intelligence agency – with a staff of thousands and a budget of billions – being unable to locate a former employee within American borders.

Perhaps what the CIA really needed was someone like Joseph McBride. Though not an investigative journalist, McBride had no trouble finding George William Bush. Not only was the man findable; he was still on the U.S. government payroll. By 1988 this George Bush was working as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration. He explained to McBride that he had worked only briefly at the CIA, as a GS-5 probationary civil servant, analyzing documents and photos during the night shift. Moreover, he said, he had never received interagency briefings.

Several years later, in 1991, former *Texas Observer* editor David Armstrong would track down the other person listed on the Hoover memo, Captain William Edwards. Edwards could confirm that he had been on duty at the Defense Intelligence Agency the day in question. He said he did not remember this briefing, but that he found the memo plausible in reference to a briefing he might have received over the phone while at his desk. While he said he had no idea who the George Bush was who also was briefed, Edwards' rank and experience was certainly far above that of the night clerk George William

Bush.

Shortly after McBride's article appeared in the *Nation*, the magazine ran a follow-up op-ed, in which the author provided evidence that the Central Intelligence Agency had foisted a lie on the American people. The piece appeared while everyone else was focusing on Bush's coronation at the Louisiana Superdome. As with McBride's previous story, this disclosure was greeted with the equivalent of a collective media yawn. An opportunity was bungled, not only to learn about the true history of the man who would be president, but also to recognize the "George William Bush" diversion for what it was: one in a long series of calculated distractions and disinformation episodes that run through the Bush family history.

George *William* Bush Deposes

With the election only two months away, and a growing sense of urgency in some quarters, George William Bush acknowledged under oath – as part of a deposition in a lawsuit brought by a nonprofit group seeking records on Bush's past – that he was the junior officer on a three- to four-man watch shift at CIA headquarters between September 1963 and February 1964, which was on duty when Kennedy was shot. "I do not recognize the contents of the memorandum as information furnished to me orally or otherwise during the time I was at the CIA," he said. "In fact, during my time at the CIA, I did not receive any oral communications from any government agency of any nature whatsoever. I did not receive any information relating to the Kennedy assassination during my time at the CIA from the FBI. Based on the above, it is my conclusion that I am not the Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency referred to in the memorandum." . . .

George H.W. Bush: Spy from the age of 18

Almost a decade would pass between Bush's election in 1988 and the declassification and release in 1996 of another government document that shed further light on the matter. This declassified document would help to answer some of the questions raised by the '63 Hoover memo – questions such as, "If George Herbert Walker Bush was already connected with the CIA in 1963, how far back did the relationship go?"

But yet another decade would pass before this second document would be found, *read*, and revealed to the public. Fast-forward to December 2006, on a day when JFK researcher Jerry Shinley sat, as he did on so many days, glued to his computer, browsing through the digitized database of documents on the Web site of the Mary Ferrell Foundation.

On that December day, Shinley came upon an internal CIA memo that mentioned George H. W. Bush [the Bush designated Director of Central Intelligence (DCI)]. Dated November 29, 1975, it reported, in typically spare terms, the revelation that the man who was about to become the head of the CIA actually had prior ties to the agency. And the connection discussed here, unlike that unearthed by McBride, went back not to 1963, but to 1953 – a full decade earlier. Writing to the chief of the spy section of the analysis and espionage agency, the chief of the "cover and commercial staff" noted:

Through Mr. Gale Allen . . . I learned that Mr. George Bush, DCI designate has prior knowledge of the now terminated project WUBRINY/LPDICTUM which was involved in proprietary commercial operations in Europe. He became aware of this project through Mr. Thomas J. Devine, a former CIA Staff Employee and later, oil-wildcatting associate with Mr. Bush. Their joint activities culminated in the establishment of Zapata Oil [sic] [in 1953] which they eventually sold. After the sale of Zapata Oil, Mr. Bush went into politics, and Mr. Devine became a member of the investment firm of Train, Cabot and Associates, New York . . . The attached memorandum describes the close relationship between Messrs. Devine and Bush in 1967-1968 which, according to Mr. Allen, continued while Mr. Bush was our ambassador to the United Nations.

In typical fashion for the highly compartmentalized and secretive intelligence organization, the memo did not make clear how Bush knew Devine, or whether Devine was simply dropping out of the spy business to become a true entrepreneur. For Devine, who would have been about twenty-seven years old at the time, to “resign” at such a young age, so soon after the CIA had spent a great deal of time and money training him was, at minimum, highly unusual. It would turn out, however, that Devine had a special relationship allowing him to come and go from the agency, enabling him to do other things without really leaving its employ. In fact, CIA history is littered with instances where CIA officers have tendered their “resignation” as a means of creating deniability while continuing to work closely with the agency . . .

Devine’s role in setting up Zapata would remain hidden for more than a decade – until 1965. At that point, as Bush was extricating himself from business to devote his energies to pursuing a congressional seat, Devine’s name suddenly surfaced as a member of the board of Bush’s spin-off company, Zapata Offshore – almost as if it was his function to keep the operation running. To be sure, he and Bush remained joined at the hip . . .

Devine, like the senior George Bush, is now in his eighties and still active in business in New York. When I reached him in the winter of 2007 and told him about recently uncovered CIA memos that related both his agency connections and his longtime ties to Bush, he uttered a dry chuckle, then continued cautiously.

“Tell me who you are working with in the family,” he asked when I informed him I was working on a book about the Bushes. I explained that the book was not exactly an “authorized” biography, and therefore I was not “working” with someone in the family. Moreover, I noted, the Bushes were not known for their responsiveness to journalistic inquiries. “The family policy has been as long as George has been in office, they don’t talk to media,” Devine replied. But he agreed to contact the Bush family seeking clearance. “Well, the answer is, I will inquire. I have your telephone number, and I’ll call you back when I’ve enquired.”

Surprisingly enough, he did call again, two weeks later, having checked in with his old friend in Houston. He explained that he had been told by former president George H.W. Bush not to cooperate. When I spoke to him several months later, he still would not talk about anything – though he did complain that, thanks to an article I had written about him for the Real News Project (www.realnews.org), he was now listed in Wikipedia. And then he did offer a few words:

Thomas Devine: I just broke one of the first rules in this game.

Russ Baker: And what is that?

Thomas Devine: Do not complain.

In fact, Devine had little to complain about. At the time, although I was aware that he seemed to be confirming that he himself had been in the “game,” I did not understand the full extent of his activities in conjunction with Bush. Nor did I understand the heightened significance of their relationship during the tumultuous event of 1963, to be discussed in subsequent chapters.

No Business like the Spy Business

Before there was an Office of Strategic Services (July 1942-October 1945) or a Central Intelligence Agency (founded in 1947), corporations and attorneys who represented international businesses often employed associates in their firms as private agents to gather data on competitors and business opportunities abroad. So it was only to be expected that many of the first OSS recruits were taken from the ranks of oil companies, Wall Street banking firms, and Ivy League universities and often equated the interests of their high-powered business partners with the national interest. Such relationships like

the one between George H. W. Bush and Thomas Devine thus made perfect sense to the CIA . . .

By the time George H. W. Bush founded his own company, Zapata Petroleum, it was not difficult to line up backers with long-standing ties to industrial espionage activities. The setup with Devine in the oil business provided Bush with a perfect cover to travel abroad and . . . identify potential CIA recruits among foreign nationals . . .

“Poppy” Bush’s own role with intelligence appears to date back as early as the Second World War, when he joined the Navy at age eighteen. On arrival at his training base in Norfolk, Virginia, in the fall of 1942, Bush was trained not only as a pilot of a torpedo bomber but also as a photographic officer, responsible for crucial, highly sensitive aerial surveillance . . .

After mastering the technique of operating the handheld K-20 aerial camera and film processing, Bush recruited and trained other pilots and crewmen. His own flight team became part bomber unit, part spy unit. The information they obtained about the Japanese navy, as well as crucial intelligence on Japanese land-based defenses, was forwarded to the U.S. Navy’s intelligence center at Pearl Harbor and to the Marine Corps for use in planning amphibious landings in order to reduce casualties.

The so-called Operation Snapshot was so hush-hush that, under naval regulations in effect at the time, even revealing its name would lead to court-martial. According to a book by Robert Stinnett, a fellow flier, Admiral Marc Mitscher hit the “bulkhead” when he saw that Bush’s team had filed a report in which they actually referred by name to their top-secret project. The three people above Bush in his command chain were made to take razor blades to the pages of the report and remove the forbidden language.

The lesson was apparently not lost on Bush. From that moment forward, as every Bush researcher has learned, Bush’s life would honor the principle: no names, no paper trail, no fingerprints. If you wanted to know what Bush had done, you had to have the patience of a sleuth yourself.

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 2: Skull And Bones Forever

By [Russ Baker](#)

Sep 25, 2013

What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the second part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker’s bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America’s Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.



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Skull and Bones

In 1945, with the end of the war, George H. W. “Poppy” Bush entered Yale University. The CIA recruited heavily at all of the Ivy League schools in those days, with the New Haven campus the standout. “Yale has always been the agency’s biggest feeder,” recalled CIA officer Osborne Day (class of ’43), “In my Yale class alone there were thirty-five guys in the agency.” Bush’s father, Prescott, was on the university’s board, and the school was crawling with faculty serving as recruiters for the intelligence services . . . Yale’s society’s boys were the cream of the crop, and could keep secrets to boot. And no secret society was more suited to the spy establishment than Skull and Bones, for which Poppy Bush, like his father, was tapped in his junior year. Established in 1832, Skull and Bones is the oldest secret society at Yale, and thus at least theoretically entrusted its membership with a more comprehensive body of secrets than any other campus group. Bones alumni would appear throughout the public and private history of both wartime and peacetime intelligence . . .

When Bush entered Yale, the university was welcoming back countless veterans of the OSS to its faculty. Bush, with naval intelligence work already under his belt by the time he arrived at Yale, would have been seen as a particularly prime candidate for recruitment.

Bonesmen Have All the Muscle

Out of Yale, Bush went directly into the employ of Dresser Industries, a peculiar, family-connected firm providing essential services to the oil industry. Dresser has never received the scrutiny it deserves. Between the lines of its official story can be discerned an alternate version that could suggest a corporate double life . . .

The S. R. Dresser Manufacturing Company had been a small, solid, unexceptional outfit, . . . [when it found] eager buyers in Prescott Bush’s Yale friends Roland and W. Averell Harriman – the sons of railroad tycoon E. H. Harriman – who had only recently set up a merchant bank to assist wealthy families in such endeavors. At the time, Dresser’s principal assets consisted of two very valuable patents in the rapidly expanding oil industry. One was for a packer that made it much easier to remove oil from the ground; the other was for a coupler that made long-range natural gas pipelines feasible. Instead of controlling the oil, Dresser’s strategy was to control the technology that made drilling possible. W.A. Harriman and Company, which had brought Prescott Bush aboard two years earlier, purchased Dresser in 1928.

Prescott Bush and his partners installed an old friend, H. Neil Mallon, at the helm. Mallon’s primary credential was that he was “one of them.” Like Prescott Bush, Mallon was from Ohio, and his family seems both to have known the Bushes and to have had its own set of powerful connections. He was Yale, and he was Skull and Bones, so he could be trusted . . .

Hiring decisions by the Bonesmen at the Harriman firm were presented as jolly and distinctly informal, with club and family being prime qualifications . . . Under Mallon, the company underwent an astonishing transformation. As World War II approached, Dresser began expanding, gobbling up one militarily strategic manufacturer after another. While Dresser was still engaged in the mundane manufacture of drill bits, drilling mud, and other products useful to the oil industry, it was also moving closer to the heart of the rapidly growing military-industrial sector as a defense contractor and subcontractor. It also assembled a board that would epitomize the cozy relationships between titans of industry, finance, media, government, military, and intelligence – and the revolving door between those sectors . . .



Poppy Gets his Hands Oily

After graduating from Yale in 1948, Poppy headed out to visit “Uncle Neil” at Dresser headquarters, which were then in Cleveland. Mallon dispatched the inexperienced Yale grad and Navy vet, with his wife Barbara and firstborn George W. in tow, to Odessa, the remote West Texas boomtown that, with neighboring Midland, was rapidly becoming the center of the oil extraction business.

Oil was certainly a strategic business. A resource required in abundance to fuel the modern navy, army, and air force, oil had driven the engine of World War II. With the end of hostilities, America still had plenty of petroleum, but the demands of the war had exhausted many oil fields. As President Roosevelt’s secretary of the interior and later his petroleum administrator for war, Harold Ickes had warned in 1943, “If there should be a World War III it would have to be fought with someone else’s petroleum, because the United States wouldn’t have it.” . . . Ickes’s eye was then on Saudi Arabia.

If the young George H.W. Bush understood anything about the larger game and his expected role in it, he and his wife Barbara certainly did not let on to the neighbors in those early days in dusty West Texas . . . Poppy’s initial jobs included sweeping out warehouses and painting machinery used for oil drilling, but he was soon asked to handle more challenging tasks . . .

Dresser was well-known in the right circles as providing handy cover to CIA operatives . . . Continuing his whirlwind “training,” Dresser transferred Bush to California, where the company had begun acquiring subsidiaries in 1940. Poppy has never written or spoken publicly in any depth about the California period of his career. He has made only brief references to work on the assembly line at Dresser’s Pacific Pump Works in the Los Angeles suburb of Huntington Park and sales chores for other companies owned by Dresser. In later years, when criticized for his anti-union stands, he would pull out a union card which he claimed came from his membership in the United Steelworkers Union. Why Bush joined the Steelworkers (and attended their meetings) is something of a mystery, since that union was not operating inside Pacific Pump Works.

To be sure, the company was not just pumping water out of the ground anymore. During World War II, Pacific Pump became, like Dresser, an important cog in the war machine. The firm supplied hydraulic-actuating assemblies for airplane landing gear, wing flaps, and bomb doors, and even provided crucial parts for the top-secret process that produced the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

While in California training for Dresser, Poppy, the pregnant Barbara, and little George W. were constantly on the go, with at least five residences in a period of nine months – Huntington Park, Bakersfield, Whittier, Ventura, and Compton. Poppy was often absent, according to Barbara, even from

their brief-tenure outposts. Was he truly a Willy Loman, peddling drill bits, dragging a pregnant wife and a one-year-old child with him? Or was he doing something else? Although “ordinary” scions often toil briefly at the bottom, Bush was no ordinary scion.

Bush would so effectively obscure his life that even some of his best friends seemed to know little about what he was actually doing – though they may have intuited it. A longtime friend of Bush’s said that Bush probably would have been happiest as a career intelligence officer. Another longtime Bush associate told a reporter anonymously that Poppy’s own accounts of various periods in his life “are often off 10 to 30 percent ... there is a certain reserve, even secretiveness.”

From Dallas, with Love

In 1950, during the time Poppy Bush squired a Yugoslav Communist around the oil fields for Dresser Industries, the cold war got hot in an unexpected quarter when North Korean Communist forces launched an invasion of the south. Their attack had not been even vaguely anticipated in the National Intelligence Estimate – from the fledgling CIA – which had arrived on the president’s desk just six days before. Heads rolled, and in the ensuing shake-up, Allen Dulles became deputy director in charge of clandestine operations, which included both spying and proactive covert operations. For the Bushes, who had a decades-long personal and business relationship to the Dulles family, this was certainly an interesting development.

The Dulles and Bush clans had long mixed over business, politics, and friendship, and the corollary to all three – intelligence. Even as far back as World War I, while Dulles’s uncle served as secretary of state, Prescott’s father, Samuel Bush, oversaw small arms manufacturing for the War Industries Board, and young Allen played a crucial role in the fledgling intelligence services operations in Europe. Later, the families interacted regularly as the Bush clan plied their trade in investment banking and the Dulleses in the law.

In 1950, Dresser was completing a corporate relocation to Dallas which, besides being an oil capital, was rapidly becoming a center of the defense industry and its military-industrial-energy elite. Though a virtual unknown on his arrival, Neil Mallon quickly set about bringing the conservative titans of Dallas society together in a new local chapter of the non-profit Council on World Affairs, in whose Cleveland branch he had been active. Started in 1918, the World Affairs Councils of America were a localized equivalent of the Rockefeller-backed Council on Foreign Relations, the presidency of which Allen Dulles had just resigned to take his post at the CIA.

A September 1951 organizing meeting at Mallon’s home featured a group with suggestive connections and affiliations. It included Fred Florence, the founder of the Republic National Bank, whose Dallas office tower was a covert repository for CIA-connected ventures; T. E. Braniff, a pioneer of the airline industry and member of the Knights of Malta, an exclusive, conservative, Vatican-connected order with longtime intelligence ties; Fred Wooten, an official of the First National Bank of Dallas, which would employ Poppy Bush in the years between his tenure as CIA director and vice president; and Colonel Robert G. Storey, later named as liaison between Texas law enforcement and the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy . . .

Soon the group moved even closer to the center of power. General Dwight Eisenhower . . . had responded to entreaties from a GOP group that included the Rockefellers and Prescott Bush, as well as Allen and John Foster Dulles. . . . With Ike the Republican nominee, they all scrambled for seats on his train. The Dulleses were key advisers. Prescott Bush was backing Ike and mounting what would be a successful race for a Senate seat from Connecticut. Prescott’s son George H. W. Bush was not left out. He became the Midland County chairman of the Eisenhower-Nixon campaigns in both 1952 and 1956. With the West Texas city at the center of the oil boom, young George functioned as a crucial link between the Eastern Establishment, the next Republican administration, and Midland’s oil-based new

wealth.

Following Ike's decisive victory, the Dulles brothers obtained effective control of foreign policy: John Foster became Ike's secretary of state, and Allen the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. The rest of the administration was filled with Bush allies, including national security adviser Gordon Gray, a close friend of Prescott's, and Treasury Secretary Robert B. Anderson, a sometime member of the Dresser Industries board.

Eisenhower, with no track record in civilian government and little enthusiasm for the daily grind, was only too happy to leave many of the operational decisions to these others . . . Some of those businessmen taking it upon themselves to help chart the course were from the Dallas group. Shortly after Ike took office, Mallon's Council of World Affairs announced its intention to send fifteen members on a three-month world tour, for meetings with what the group characterized as "responsible" political and business leaders. Shortly after the group returned, Dulles came to visit with the Dallas council chapter . . .

At the time, the CIA was in the process of creating plausible liability as it began what would be a series of efforts to topple "unfriendly" regimes around the world, including those in Guatemala and Iran. Since the CIA's charter severely constrained the domestic side of covert operations, agents created a host of entities to serve as middlemen to support rebels in countries targeted for regime change. During the early days of Dresser in Dallas – and of Zapata Petroleum – Dulles was just beginning to experiment with "off the books" operations. Eventually, by the seventies and eighties, when Poppy Bush ran the CIA and coordinated covert operations as vice president, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such entities had been created . . .

The Bones of Zapata Petroleum

In 1953, as Dulles was building his global machine, Poppy Bush launched his own enterprise, with help from Dulles, Mallon, and Poppy's maternal uncle Herbert Walker . . .

Bush got money from Uncle Herbie (George Herbert Walker Jr., *Skull and Bones*, 1927), an investment banker. Uncle Herbie also was instrumental in bringing in others, including Eugene Meyer, a Yale graduate and owner of the influential *Washington Post*. Meyer was one of many media titans, such as Prescott's good friend and fellow Bonesman Henry Luce, founder of *Time* magazine, and William Paley of CBS (on whose board Prescott sat), who shared an interest in intelligence. In a 1977 *Rolling Stone* article, Carl Bernstein, famed for breaking the Watergate story in the *Washington Post*, states that both Luce and Paley cooperated regularly with the CIA, and even mentions his own paper's history with the agency, though he does not fully probe the *Post*'s intelligence connections . . .

The news business, the policy business, and the intelligence business had a lot in common: they were all about whom you knew and what you knew. In fact, so was the oil business. The Bushes' skill at cultivating connections was evident in 1953, when Poppy joined forces with a couple of brothers, Hugh and Bill Liedtke, to form Zapata Petroleum. Based on a "hunch" of Hugh Liedtke's, the company drilled 127 consecutive "wet" holes, and the firm's stock exploded from seven cents a share to twenty-three dollars a share . . .



Mural by Jose Clemente Orozco

Pirates of the Caribbean

. . . Mallon would play a crucial role for Dulles by introducing him to the powerful new-moneyed oil elites in Dallas that would, along with a separate group in Houston, become the leading funders of off-the-books covert operations in Latin America. They would commence with efforts to overthrow Latin American and Caribbean leaders in the 1950s. The efforts would continue, under Poppy Bush, with Iran-contra in the 1980s.

Zapata Offshore . . . [was] launched by Poppy in 1954, just as the U.S. government, under an administration dominated by the Dulles-Bush circles, began auctioning offshore mineral rights . . .

In 1958, Zapata Offshore's drilling rig *Scorpion* was moved from the Gulf of Mexico to Cay Sal Bank, the most remote group of islands in the Bahamas and just fifty-four miles north of Isabela, Cuba. The [Cay Sal] island had been recently leased to oilman Howard Hughes, who had his own long-standing CIA ties, as well as his own "private CIA."

By most appearances, a number of CIA-connected entities were involved in the operation. Zapata leased the *Scorpion* to Standard Oil of California and to Gulf Oil. CIA director Dulles had previously served as Gulf's counsel for Latin America. The same year that Gulf leased Bush's platform, CIA veteran Kermit "Kim" Roosevelt joined Gulf's board. This was the same Kermit Roosevelt who had overseen the CIA's successful 1953 coup against the democratically elected Iranian prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, after Mossadegh began nationalizing Anglo-American oil concessions. It looked like the Bush-CIA group was preparing for operations in the Caribbean basin.

The offshore platforms had a specific purpose. "George Bush would be given a list of names of Cuban oil workers we would want placed in jobs," said one official connected to Operation Mongoose, the program to overthrow Castro. "The oil platforms he dealt in were perfect for training the Cubans in raids on their homeland."

The importance of this early Bush connection with Cuba should not be ignored in assessing his connections to contemporaneous events. For example, it sheds light on the 1963 memo from J. Edgar Hoover discovered by reporter Joseph McBride. The memo, which mentioned a briefing about Cuban activity in the wake of the JFK assassination, had been given to “George Bush of the CIA.” Years later, many figures from the Bay of Pigs operation would resurface in key positions in administrations in which Poppy Bush held high posts, and during his presidency. Others would show up in off-the-books operations run by Poppy’s friends and associates.

George H. W. Bush did not, however, limit himself to the Caribbean. This period of his life was characterized by frenetic travel to all corners of the world, though Zapata had only a handful of rigs. The pattern would continue through his entire career. He set up operations for Zapata Offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, the Persian Gulf, Trinidad, Borneo, and Medellín, Colombia. Clients included the Kuwait Shell Petroleum Development Company, which began his close association with the Kuwaiti elite.

Facing Fidel

That a lot of what was labeled “national security” work was largely about money – making it, protecting it – was fairly transparent. Through the story of the Bushes and their circle runs a thread of entitlement to resources in other countries, and anger and disbelief when others challenged that claim.

Upon coming to power in 1959, Fidel Castro began to expropriate the massive properties of large foreign (chiefly American) companies. The impact fell heavily on American corporations that had massive agricultural and mineral operations on the fertile island, including Brown Brothers Harriman, whose extensive holdings included the two-hundred-thousand-acre Punta Alegre beet sugar plantation. After Castro took power, the Eisenhower administration began a boycott of Cuban sugar, which is a crucial component of the island’s economy. The Cubans in turn became increasingly dependent on the USSR as supplier of goods and protector.

Poppy swung into gear the same year that Castro began nationalizing [American] properties. He severed his ties to the Liedtkes by buying out their stake in Zapata Offshore, and then moved its operations to Houston – which, unlike the remote Midland-Odessa area, had access to the Caribbean through the Houston Ship Channel. Meanwhile, back in Washington, after extensive planning, the Bay of Pigs project began with Eisenhower’s approval on March 17, 1960 . . .

Beyond providing a staging area for Cuban rebels, Zapata Offshore appears to have served as a paymaster. “We had to pay off politicians in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and elsewhere,” said John Sherwood, chief of CIA anti-Castro operations in the early 1960s. “Bush’s company was used as a conduit for these funds under the guise of oil business contracts . . . The major breakthrough was when we were able, through Bush, to place people in PEMEX – the big Mexican national oil operation.”

Zapata filings “inadvertently destroyed”

The complicated PEMEX affair began in 1960, when Zapata Offshore offered a lucrative secret partnership to a competing Mexican drilling equipment company, Perforaciones Marinas del Golfe, or Permargo. George H. W. Bush did not want this relationship exposed, even decades later. When investigative reporter Jonathan Kwitny tried to document Bush’s precise involvement with Permargo for a 1988 article, he was told by an SEC spokeswoman that Zapata filings from 1960 to 1966 had been “inadvertently destroyed” several months after Bush became vice president . . .

Evidence that Zapata Offshore was more than just Poppy Bush’s oil company surfaced in the years that followed. Bush increasingly spent his time on politics, and others were brought in to transform the company into a larger entity that could more credibly run global operations . . . Bush’s reward for all his troubles may have come in 1965, when one of the company’s rigs was ostensibly lost in Hurricane

Betsy. For the first time in its history, the insurance giant Lloyds of London paid out an oil-platform disaster claim without physical evidence. Zapata received eight million dollars for a rig that had cost only three million. The fate of the rig remains a mystery. Poppy's brother Bucky recalled the fears expressed by Zapata offshore staff that it would be impossible for an insurance claim to be paid because of the absence of any wreckage. But Poppy himself was calm, reassuring his people that "everything was going to be all right." . . .

The financials of Zapata, like those of latter-day Enron, were almost impossible to understand. This appears to have been by design. A bit of this can be gleaned from the words of the company's former executive Bob Gow, another in a small army of Bush loyalists who show up repeatedly in the family story – and by extension the nation's.

What Was Zapata?

Bob Gow may be the only person in American history to be employed by one future president (Poppy Bush—at Zapata) and to later employ another (George W.—at Gow's post-Zapata agricultural mini-conglomerate Stratford of Texas)....

In 2006, I traveled to Mexico, to the western Yucatan, and met with Gow... I also obtained Gow's self-published memoirs, the five hundred pages of which include much about Zapata, bamboo, beeswax, and catfish, but manage to say little about the Bushes and their doings. Gow did, however admit that he did some spying for the CIA...

Gow was a member of the country's mostly invisible elites...

Bob Gow and Ray Walker [cousin of George H.W. Bush] would room together again at Yale, and both would be inducted into the 1955 class of Skull and Bones...

Gow's recruitment by the Bushes illustrates the kind of opportunities that come to those of the "right sort" and possessed of the appropriate discretion...

Gow portrays Bush as traveling constantly when he was Zapata chief, and far from connected when on premises . . . Though Gow has little to say in his book about the company's underlying operations or Poppy's role in them, he proudly notes Zapata's complex web of foreign ventures. In all probability, the foreign operations had dual functions. Since Zapata was set up with guidance from Neil Mallon, it is likely that the overseas undertakings were modeled in part on Dresser's. According to the in-house history of Dresser, one of the company's bolder moves was a then-innovative tax strategy that involved a separate company in the tiny European principality of Liechtenstein. "A considerable [benefit] was the fact that no American taxes had to be paid on international earnings until the money was returned to the United States." That is, *if* the money was ever returned to the United States. And there was another characteristic of funds that were not repatriated: they were out of sight of federal authorities. There was no effective way to know where they went ultimately, or for what purposes.

That was Dresser. Now, Zapata, according to Gow: "Zapata, at that time, consisted of a number of foreign corporations incorporated in each county where our rigs operated . . . It was largely the brainchild of the tax department at Arthur Andersen and the tax lawyers at Baker and Botts . . . Until the profits were brought back to the United States, it was not necessary at that time to pay U.S. taxes on them. Because of the way Zapata operated around the world, it seemed as though it never would be necessary to pay taxes . . . As time passed and Zapata worked in many other countries, Zapata's cash . . . was in the accounts of a large number (dozens and dozens) of companies located in almost all the countries around the world where Zapata had ever drilled."

Whether Zapata was partially designed for laundering money for covert or clandestine operations may never be known. But one thing is certain: spy work depends, as much as anything, on a large flow of

funds for keeping foreign palms greased. It is an enormously expensive business, and it requires layers and layers of ostensibly unconnected cutouts for the millions to flow properly and without detection.

So what, exactly, was Zapata? Was it CIA? Gow won't say. Although in his memoirs he freely admits that he served the CIA later on, he strives mightily to avoid extensive discussion of the Bush clan . . .

Then I asked Gow about allegations that Zapata Offshore had played a role in the Bay of Pigs invasion: "Any comments on those?"

Gow hesitated a moment, smiled just a bit, and then replied, "No."

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 3: Where Was Poppy November 22, 1963?

By [Russ Baker](#)

Oct 2, 2013



*What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the **third** part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of](#)*

Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years. The story is a real-life thriller.

Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 3 come from Chapter 4 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)

For Part 1, please go [here](#), for Part 2, go [here](#).

“Somewhere in Texas”

George H. W. Bush may be one of the few Americans of his generation who cannot recall exactly where he was when John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

At times he has said that he was “somewhere in Texas.” Bush was indeed “somewhere” in Texas. And he had every reason to remember. At the time Bush was the thirty-nine-year-old chairman of the Harris County (Houston) Republican Party and an outspoken critic of the president. He was also actively campaigning for a seat in the U.S. Senate at exactly the time Kennedy was assassinated right in Bush’s own state. The story behind Bush’s apparent evasiveness is complicated. Yet it is crucial to an understanding not just of the Bush family, but also of a tragic chapter in the nation’s history.

Who Wanted Kennedy Dead?

The two and a half years leading up to November 22, 1963, had been tumultuous ones. The Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, designed to dislodge Fidel Castro and his Cuban revolution from its headquarters ninety miles off the Florida Keys, was an embarrassing foreign policy failure. Certainly in terms of lives lost and men captured, it was also a human disaster. But within the ruling American elite it was seen primarily as a jolt to the old boys’ network – a humiliating debacle, and a rebuke of the supposedly infallible CIA. For John Kennedy it also presented an opportunity. He had been impressed with the CIA at first, and depended on its counterinsurgency against Communists and nationalists in the third world. But the Bay of Pigs disaster gave him pause. Whatever Kennedy’s own role in the invasion fiasco, it had been planned on Dwight Eisenhower’s watch. Kennedy had been asked to green-light it shortly after taking office, and in retrospect he felt the agency had deceived him in several key respects.

The most critical involved Cubans’ true feelings toward Castro. The CIA had predicted that the island population would rise up to support the invaders. When this did not happen, the agency, Air Force, Army, and Navy all put pressure on the young president to authorize the open use of U.S. armed forces. In effect they wanted to turn a supposed effort of armed Cuban “exiles” to reclaim their homeland into a full-fledged U.S. invasion. But Kennedy would not go along. The success of the operation had been predicated on something – a popular uprising – that hadn’t happened, and Kennedy concluded it would be foolish to get in deeper.

Following the disaster, CIA director Allen Dulles mounted a counteroffensive against criticism of the agency. Dulles denied that the plan had been dependent on a popular insurrection. Just weeks after the calamity, he offered this account on *Meet the Press*: “I wouldn’t say we expected a popular uprising. We were expecting something else to happen in Cuba . . . something that didn’t materialize.” For his part Kennedy was furious at Dulles for this self-serving explanation. He also was deeply frustrated about the CIA’s poor intelligence and suspected that the CIA had sought to force him into an invasion from the very beginning.

The president told his advisers he wanted “to splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds.” Within weeks of the invasion disaster, Washington was speculating on Dulles’s departure. By autumn, he was gone, along with his lieutenants Charles Cabell and Richard Bissell. But in the end, it was not the CIA but rather John F. Kennedy who was destroyed.

The assassination of JFK has fathered a thousand theories, and nearly as many books and studies. Through it all, no consensus has emerged. Most “respectable” academics, journalists, and news organizations don’t want to get near the matter, lest they be labeled conspiracy nuts. Most Americans harbor an overwhelming psychic resistance to what retired UC Berkeley professor and author Peter Dale Scott has called the “deep politics” surrounding the assassination. Few of us care to contemplate the awful prospect that the forces we depend upon for security and order could themselves be subverted.

When the Kennedy assassination is mentioned, the inquiry tends to focus on the almost impossible task of determining who fired how many shots and from where. This obsession with the gun or guns bypasses the more basic – and therefore more dangerous questions: Who wanted Kennedy dead, and why? And what did they hope to gain?

Earl Warren to LBJ: “I’ll just do whatever you say.”

The years since the first assassination investigation was hastily concluded in September 1964 have not been kind to the Warren Commission. Subsequent inquiries have found the commission’s process, and the resulting report, horrendously flawed. And there are lingering questions about the very origins of the commission. First, all the members were appointed by Kennedy’s successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, who was – stark as this may sound – a chief beneficiary of the assassination, having immediately replaced the dead president to become the thirty-sixth president of the United States.

The commission’s chairman was the presiding chief justice of the Supreme Court. Earl Warren was the perfect choice because he was seen by the public as an honest, incorruptible man of substance. Warren’s involvement gave the commission a certain credibility and convinced major newspapers like the *New York Times* to continue supporting the commission report over the years.

Warren resisted LBJ’s call to service, but finally acquiesced, leading the panel to the conclusions it reached. To get Warren to say yes, Johnson had warned the justice that Oswald might be tied, through an alleged Mexico City visit, to the Soviets and Cubans. He implied that this could lead to nuclear war if level heads did not prevail.

As Johnson explained in a taped telephone conversation with Senator Richard Russell, himself reluctant to join the panel:

Warren told me he wouldn’t do it under any circumstances . . . He came down here and told me *no* – twice. And I just pulled out what [FBI director] Hoover told me about a little incident in Mexico City . . . And he started crying and he said, “I won’t turn you down. I’ll just do whatever you say.”



And that got Warren—and the public trust he brought—on board.

Allen Dulles, the member who asked the most questions, would have been himself considered a prime suspect by any standard police methodology. Moreover, he was expert not only in assassinations but also in deception and camouflage.

Dulles's animus toward Kennedy was never overt, but it was incontrovertible. In ousting him, Kennedy was showing the door to a man who had spent his entire adult life in spy work. Behind the pipe-smoking, professorial mien, Allen Dulles was a ruthless, calculating man with blood on his hands. Certainly, the veteran master spy, director since 1953, could not have expected to stay on under Kennedy indefinitely. But to be forced out after what seemed to him a glorious decade of covert operations (including successful coups in Guatemala and Iran) – and on account of what he considered Kennedy's failure of nerve regarding the Bay of Pigs invasion – must have been galling. Dulles was,



according to his subordinate E. Howard Hunt, a “remarkable man whose long career of government service had been destroyed unjustly by men who were laboring unceasingly to preserve their own public images.”

“I have never forgiven them.”

Among those infuriated with the Kennedys was none other than Dulles's good friend Senator Prescott Bush. In 1961, when Dulles brought his successor, John McCone, to a dinner at Prescott's home, the senator recalled that he “tried to make a pleasant evening of it, but I was sick at heart, and

angry too, for it was the Kennedy's [sic] that brot [sic] about the [Bay of Pigs] fiasco.”

He expressed this anger in a condolence letter to Allen Dulles's widow in 1969, discovered among Dulles's papers at Princeton University. Prescott's next line is particularly memorable: “I have never forgiven them.” The expression of such lingering resentment, six years after JFK's death, was doubly chilling because it came just months after a second Kennedy, Robert, had been gunned down under

mysterious circumstances, once again by a seemingly unstable lone gunman.

Clearing the Way for Poppy

In the spring of 1962, about six months after Dulles's departure from the Kennedy administration, both Prescott Bush and his son Poppy made some considerable and rather abrupt changes to their lives. Prescott Bush, having already begun his reelection campaign and opened his headquarters, surprised virtually everyone by reversing himself and announcing that he would not seek a new term after all. The reason he gave was that he was tired and physically not well enough to endure another six years. This decision struck people as curious, in part because Prescott so dearly loved his life in Washington, and in part because he would turn out to be physically robust for a number of years afterward, and would even express his deep regret at having chosen to leave the Senate. Whatever took him away from Washington seems to have been pressing.

Just as Prescott was leaving the political arena, his son was entering it at high speed. Poppy, who until then had been barely involved with local Houston politics, suddenly became consumed with them. Conventional accounts treat Bush's new interest as simply the next step in the life of an ambitious man, but for the Bush family, there was an almost inexplicable urgency. At a Washington political gathering, Prescott pulled aside the Harris County (Houston) GOP chairman, James Bertron, and demanded that Bertron find a place in his organization for Poppy. "Senator," replied Bertron, "I'm trying. We're all trying."

This pressure quickly paid off. In the fall of 1962, Poppy was named finance co-chair of the Harris County Republican Party, a position which likely entailed visiting wealthy oilmen and asking them for money. Just a few months later, in early 1963, James Bertron abruptly announced his intention to retire and move to Florida, and Poppy announced his intention to succeed him. A party activist who had expressed his desire for the position suddenly abandoned his candidacy, and Bush won the position by acclamation. Now he had a plausible reason not only to be visiting with wealthy oilmen, but also to be building an operational team, ostensibly for political purposes.

Oiling the Rest of the Way for Poppy

That summer of 1963, right in the middle of his move out of the oil business into politics, Poppy Bush embarked on a busy itinerary of foreign business travel for Zapata Offshore. The trip seemed ambitious, especially when one considers the realistic opportunities for a firm with just a few rigs.

Upon his return, Poppy's new lust for political power hit warp speed: now he had decided to seek a U.S. Senate seat. In less than a year he had gone from uninvolved to finance co-chair to county chairman to U.S. Senate hopeful. As a businessman engaged in offshore drilling, Poppy Bush had little reason to be traveling extensively throughout Texas. As Harris County chairman, Poppy had Houston as his bailiwick. But as a Senate candidate, he had every reason to be seen all over the Lone Star State.

Bush's political work, like his oil work, may have been cover for intelligence activity. But there were political objectives as well, ones that conflicted with those of John Kennedy. In deciding to run for U.S. Senate, Poppy was playing a key role in the Republican effort to unyoke the conservative south from the Democratic wagon it had pulled to victory in 1960. Jack and Bobby Kennedy, meanwhile were busy strategizing exactly how to prevent that –and this was going to be a crucial battle, given JFK's wafer-thin victory in the previous election. Two states in particular would be battlegrounds: Florida and Texas. In theory, a candidate like Poppy Bush, with his family connections to Wall Street, could be a strong fund-raiser and perhaps contribute to a substantially increased Republican turnout in 1964, even if Bush himself was not elected. To head off this larger threat, it was clear to Kennedy's political advisers that Jack would have to campaign in Texas, along with Florida. Kennedy was interested in revoking the oil depletion allowance, a decision that would have meant steep losses for Texas oilmen,

and he continued voicing his support for civil rights, always a contentious issue in the South.

As a candidate for statewide office, Poppy Bush was on the go in the fall of 1963, moving around Texas and spending time in Dallas, where he opened a headquarters.



Poppy and Barbara, November 3, 1964

Another Memory Lapse

Jack Kennedy's death in Dallas on November 22, 1963, was one of the most tragically memorable moments in the lives of those who lived through it. So Poppy Bush's inability or unwillingness to say where he was on that day is extremely odd, to say the least.

His haziness became an issue a quarter century after the assassination – when there emerged yet another good reason for Bush to have recalled that day vividly. On Thursday, August 25, 1988, about six weeks after the *Nation* published Joseph McBride's piece on "George Bush of the CIA" – and just a week after George H. W. Bush accepted the Republican presidential nomination – a short article appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner*, with the intriguing headline: "Documents: Bush Blew Whistle on Rival in JFK Slaying." The article began like this: A man who identified himself as George H. W. Bush phoned the FBI in Houston a few hours after President John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas to report that a right-wing Young Republican had "been talking of killing the president," FBI documents show.

The FBI, the article goes on to say, promptly followed up on Bush's tip and interviewed the Young Republican, a man by the name of James Milton Parrott. Parrott claimed he had never threatened Kennedy, and his mother declared that he had been at home with her in Houston all day.

The author of this story, the *Examiner's* Miguel Acoca, had been unable to reach Parrott but noted that the FBI report on Bush's call listed the address of the tipster as 5525 Briar, Houston, Texas – the address of the man who was now, in 1988, vice president of the United States.

Like Bush, Acoca, a Panamanian, had graduated from Yale. He spent the early 1960's in the Miami area working for *Life* magazine, where dinners at his Coconut Grove apartment were typically populated by Cuban émigrés and CIA officers managing the war against Castro. While still in Miami, Acoca became interested in the group running the CIA's JM/WAVE Cuban operations station in the area, and developed a growing obsession with assassinations in general, and JFK's in particular.

Acoca had placed a call to Bush's office once he discovered that the vice president had been the tipster

back on November 22, 1963. His call brought a familiar response:

Bush's press office at first said the vice president hadn't made the call and challenged the authenticity of the FBI reports. Then, several days later, an aide said Bush "does not recall" making the call.

Acoca's story about Bush didn't get much attention, running on page A-II of the *Examiner*. The media reaction was similar to that which greeted journalist Joseph McBride's earlier revelations: next to nothing. A few newspapers picked up the *Examiner* piece off the Hearst wire, but not a single paper bothered to assign reporters to follow up.

Thus, neither of two vexing questions – whether George Bush had been a CIA operative in 1963, and whether he had called the FBI on November 22 with purported information related to the JFK assassination – became issues for Bush in 1988 as he sailed into the White House.

By the fall of 1992, though, things were growing uncomfortable for President Bush. Arkansas governor Bill Clinton's challenge was gaining momentum, the economy was in the doldrums, and now an initiative from Congress and the public posed a new dilemma for Poppy. Oliver Stone's JFK, released in December 1991, had aroused public interest and helped prod Congress to unanimously pass the President John F. Kennedy's Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992. It required each federal agency to collect and forward all records about the JFK assassination to the National Archives, which would then make them available to the American people.

The 1988 Acoca article that caused so little stir had been based on a brief FBI summary of Bush's tip about Parrott. But there was a longer, more detailed memo in the archives, waiting to be unearthed and released.

President George H. W. Bush now found himself in the awkward position of potentially outing himself. Should he veto the politically popular JFK Act just days before voters would go to the polls to choose between him and his surging challenger, Bill Clinton? Bush, with little enthusiasm, signed the bill – though, in a move that his son George W. Bush would use without restraint, Poppy issued a "signing statement" that essentially attached conditions, asserting unilateral executive authority to withhold records on the basis of several concerns, including national security. Still, Poppy couldn't claim national security about everything, certainly not about documents that some already knew to exist, especially documents that had his own name on them.

Whether he knew it or not, with his signature, Poppy was moving the more detailed "Parrott memo" toward the light of day. In fact, government records show that the complete FBI memo from December 22, 1963, laying out the particulars of Bush's call to the agency was finally declassified in 1993, along with thousands of other papers – by the Clinton administration.

Wrong Tip at the Wrong Time

That memo, reporting the call that had come in on the day of the assassination to Special Agent Graham W. Kitchel of the Houston FBI bureau, contained some important new identifying information and other details:

[DATE: November 22, 1963]

At 1:45 p.m. Mr. GEORGE H.W. BUSH, President of the Zapata Off-shore Drilling Company, Houston, Texas, residence 5525 Briar, Houston, telephonically furnished the following information to writer by long distance telephone call from Tyler, Texas.

BUSH stated that he wanted to be kept confidential but wanted to furnish hearsay that he recalled hearing in recent weeks, the day and source unknown. He stated that one JAMES PARROTT has been talking of killing the president when he comes to Houston.

BUSH stated that PARROTT is possibly a student at the University of Houston and is active in political matters in this area. He stated that he felt MRS FAWLEY, telephone number SU 2-5239, or ARLENE SMITH, telephone number JA 9-9194 of the Harris County Republican Headquarters would be able to furnish additional information regarding the identity of PARROTT.

BUSH stated that he was proceeding to Dallas, Texas, would remain in the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel and return to his residence on 11-23-63. His office telephone Number is CA 2-0395.

The memo contained several intriguing details, but no news organization picked up on them. Indeed, no one paid any heed to the whereabouts of Poppy Bush at the time of the JFK assassination – except Barbara Bush. In 1994, three decades after Poppy began not remembering where he was on November 22, 1963, it was suddenly Barbara who remembered.

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 4: Barbara's Hair-Raising Day

By [Russ Baker](#)

Oct 9, 2013

What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the fourth part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.



Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 4 come from Chapter 4 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)

For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#);

Block, Bridge, and Beautify

In the art of propaganda, and in the daily business of public relations, a cardinal rule is that if a problem emerges, it must be managed immediately. The trick is to quickly acknowledge and gain control of the new material, mitigating the damage by redirecting it in a beneficial way. This is known in tradecraft as “block and bridge.”

Thus it was that the first and only Bush family acknowledgment of where Poppy Bush was on that red-letter day came in classic form – from the wife, in the most innocuous swathing. The venue was in her 1994 book, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir*, which was published ten months after the document's declassification. Deep in that book, mostly a compendium of narrow-gauge, self-serving recollections, there it was: not just a recollection of the assassination, but the reproduction of an actual letter written

by Barbara on the very day, at the very *moment*, that Kennedy was shot. The letter has plenty of details, but it omits one important personal item from that day: Poppy's call to the FBI; perhaps Poppy did not mention it to her?

Barbara begins to describe that fateful day on page 59 of her memoirs:

On November 22, 1963, George and I were in the middle of a several-city swing. I was getting my hair done in Tyler, Texas, working on a letter home.

Here are some excerpts:

The following is how the excerpts appear in the book, ellipses and all.

Dearest Family, Wednesday I took Doris Ulmer out for lunch. They [Al and Doris Ulmer] were here from England and they had been so nice to George in Greece. That night we went to . . .

I am writing this at the Beauty Parlor and the radio says that the President has been shot. Oh Texas – my Texas – my God – let's hope it's not true. I am sick at heart as we all are. Yes, the story is true and the Governor also. How hateful some people are.

. . . Since the Beauty Parlor the President has died. We are once again on a plane. This time a commercial plane. Poppy picked me up at the beauty parlor – we went right to the airport, flew to Ft. Worth and dropped Mr. Zeppo off (we were on his plane) and flew back to Dallas. We had to circle the field while the second presidential plane took off. Immediately Pop got tickets back to Houston and here we are flying home. We are sick at heart. The tales the radio reporters tell of Jackie Kennedy are the bravest I've ever heard. The rumors are flying about that horrid assassin. We are hoping that it is not some far right nut, but a "commie" nut. You understand that we know they are both nuts, but just hope that it is not a Texan and not an American at all.

I am amazed at the rapid-fire thinking and planning that has already been done. L.B.J. has been the president for some time now – 2 hours at least and it is only 4.30.

My dearest love to you all,

Bar

A Tap on the Shoulder

The Tyler story is borne out by the personal recollections of Aubrey Irby, then vice president of the local Kiwanis Club (and later president of Kiwanis International during Bush's vice presidency). As Irby explained to the author Kitty Kelley, Bush had been waiting to deliver a luncheon speech to his organization – to one hundred men gathered at Tyler's Blackstone Hotel.

"I remember it was a beautiful fall day," recalled Aubrey Irby, the former Kiwanis vice president. "George had just started to give his speech when Smitty, head bellhop, tapped me on the shoulder to say that President Kennedy had been shot. I gave the news to the president of the club, Wendell Cherry, and he leaned over to tell George that wires from Dallas confirmed President Kennedy had been assassinated. "George stopped his speech and told the audience what had happened. 'In view of the President's death,' he said, 'I consider it inappropriate to continue with a political speech at this time. Thank you very much for your attention.' Then he sat down. I thought that was rather magnanimous of him to say and then to sit down, but I'm a Republican of course, and I was all for George Bush. Kennedy, who was bigger than life then, represented extremely opposite views from Bush

on everything.”

In a 2007 interview with me, Irby described George H. W. Bush at the time of the news as matter-of-fact and supremely well composed. It was not unlike his own son’s composure in another moment of crisis, when, after being told about the 9/11 attacks, he calmly returned to reading “The Pet Goat” to a class of Florida second graders. As for Barbara, she miraculously found herself in the unique position of actually writing a very long letter that began while Kennedy was alive, captured the first news of the assassination, and then concluded with confirmation of his death. She, like Poppy, showed impressive composure and focus.

A Lunch with Doris – But where were Al Ulmer and Poppy?

Barbara’s curious role as recording secretary to history-in-the-making was interesting enough that one would expect the letter to have surfaced well before 1994. Yet, until it appeared in Barbara’s memoirs, it was not even known to exist. Meanwhile, the original letter itself has not turned up. Thus, many questions remain – questions that I hoped to pose to Poppy and Barbara, who declined to be interviewed for this book.

The excerpted letter warrants careful scrutiny, especially because of all the perplexing particulars. The note begins with a dull thud – a bland mention of a lunch with a “Doris Ulmer.” No Ulmer appears in any of the Bushes’ other books, which list hundreds of family friends, well-known and completely obscure. Therefore, presumably only very close Bush relatives, such as her children, would know who Doris Ulmer was or would even conceivably wish to learn of Barbara lunching with her. No one else would understand that George had even been in Greece on the occasion Barbara mentions when the Ulmers were said to be so nice to him – nor would anyone else know in what way they were so nice to him.

And yet, the style and comments in the assassination portion of the letter – “we are hoping that it is not some far right nut but a ‘commie’ nut” – are odd things to write to children.

It’s not clear from Barbara’s memoirs who the recipients of the letter were. She says “Dearest Family” and that it was “a letter home.” But those of her children who were at home were all ten years old or younger. The eldest, George W., was away at prep school in New England. Also, it would seem odd to write “a letter home” if you were only gone from home for several days of an in-state campaign swing – you would likely be back home before the letter arrived. And she signed it “Bar,” not the typical identifier in a letter to young children.



Photo taken in the early 1960’s

So the “letter home” more logically would have been to her *other* home, that is, to her parents living in the house she had left nearly two decades before. But that scenario really doesn’t make much sense either. Her mother had died in a 1949 auto accident, and her father had remarried. Barbara was known not to be especially close to her family during a period of many years and had not attended her mother’s funeral. Was “love to you all” intended for her father and stepmother? Her siblings had also long since left the nest, but perhaps she circulated correspondence among them. Besides, how did Barbara happen upon such a letter that she had purportedly written thirty years earlier? Had she kept a copy and recently discovered it? Had relatives unearthed it? Whether or not the letter was an authentic contemporaneous document, one can assume that many of the particulars of that day were in the letter because they were true and verifiable. Hence, they are of interest here.

Poppy’s call to the FBI about Parrott being the potential assassin obviously did nothing to assist the FBI in any meaningful way. But it clearly did something else: It established in government investigative files that, at the time of the assassination in Dallas, Poppy and Barbara were in Tyler, Texas. (These were things that Poppy had good reason to want established, as we’ll see later.)

The notion that there was more to the phone call than simple altruism and patriotism can be found in an examination of the most seemingly insipid of matters – such as Barbara Bush’s lunch with Doris Ulmer.

Although there were numerous Doris Ulmers in the United States at the time, only one matches the description of an old friend who had helped Poppy when Poppy visited Greece, and who was in 1963 a resident of London: Mrs. Alfred C. Ulmer Jr.

“God, we had fun.” Al Ulmer is sometimes described as having filled the positions of “attaché” and “first secretary” at the U.S. embassy in Athens from the late forties through the mid-fifties. Yet a memorial tribute to him in the alumni publication of his alma mater, Princeton, scores higher on the candor meter, describing his life in the wartime OSS and the CIA. Ulmer was a good friend and confidant of CIA director Allen Dulles. He embodied the attitude that nobody could tell the CIA what to do – nobody. “We went all over the world and we did what we wanted,” Ulmer later recalled. “God, we had fun.” He also managed coups.



When JFK forced Dulles out of the CIA following the Bay of Pigs debacle, Ulmer left as well. He went to work for the Greek shipping magnate Stavros Niarchos. That Ulmer had not fully left the espionage racket is suggested in part by Niarchos’s own long history with the CIA, which he assisted with many covert operations. In fact, the company Ulmer ran, Niarchos London Ltd., was itself a CIA proprietary according to author Peter Evans, who knew Niarchos personally. Niarchos would in turn be introduced into Poppy Bush’s immediate circle, buying Oak Tree Farm, a prime Kentucky horse-breeding property, and leasing it to the manager of Poppy Bush’s financial affairs, William Stamps Farish III.

By 1963, Poppy Bush seems to have known Ulmer for at least a decade. The reference in Barbara’s letter to the Ulmers being “so nice” to Poppy when Poppy visited Greece likely referred to the early

1950s, when Al Ulmer was station chief in Athens and Poppy Bush was beginning his frenetic world travels, ostensibly on behalf of his modestly sized Midland oil company.

Apparently, the relationship had continued, because records at the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas, show Bush stopping off to see Ulmer in London in the summer of 1963 – as part of Bush’s self-described “world tour.” (Poppy would make another in 1965, and again visit with Ulmer.)

Ulmer also had another connection to Bush – via Robert Maheu. The Zapata Offshore drilling rig that Poppy Bush had positioned near Cuba in 1958 was located off Cay Sal island, which was leased by Howard Hughes. At the time, Hughes employed Maheu as his private spook. A former FBI man whose private security firm sometimes fronted for the CIA on unauthorized operations, Maheu was, in turn, an old friend of Ulmer’s. The two had worked together on cooking up the military revolt against Indonesian president Sukarno in 1958 . . . Maheu was later involved in a series of failed plots, commencing in 1960, that involved recruiting the Mafia for a hit on Fidel Castro. In all such things, one finds a certain circularity.

The Mysterious Flights of Mr. Zeppa’s Plane

Besides Doris Ulmer, the other person Barbara mentioned in her letter is “Mr. Zeppo” – the man who had lent them his plane on November 22. As with so many other clues in documents concerning Poppy Bush, this one appears a dead end until one realizes that the name has been slightly misspelled. There was in fact no Mr. Zeppo, but there was a man, since deceased, by the name of Zeppa. Joe Zeppa founded the Tyler-based Delta Drilling Company, which became one of the world’s largest contract oil drillers, with operations around the globe

By the time Poppy came to Tyler to speak to the Kiwanis, Joe Zeppa was a good man to know. One of his sons, Chris, had previously served as the county Republican chairman, and Joe Zeppa himself owned and lived in the Blackstone Hotel, the site of Bush’s Kiwanis speech.

Barbara, in her letter, notes the use of Zeppa’s plane to leave Tyler early in the afternoon on November 22. What she does not mention is that, in all probability, she and Poppy had also arrived on Zeppa’s plane. The very fact that Zeppa lent his plane to Poppy is surprising, according to Zeppa’s son Keating, who was on company business in Argentina at the time. “Joe Zeppa was not a great one for having an actual active hand in a political campaign,” he told me, adding: “He was not one to say, ‘Here, I’ll send the plane after you.’ If Joe Zeppa were going in a given direction and a politician wanted to go along, that was fine with him.” When told that the plane bypassed Dallas’s downtown Love Field, dropped Zeppa off at Fort Worth’s municipal airport, and then backtracked to Dallas, Keating Zeppa said that was not something that his father ordinarily would have done.

Though the movements of Zeppa’s plane on the afternoon of November 22 once it left Tyler are intriguing, much more important is where it came from on the morning of November 22: Dallas.

The following facts have never been recounted by Poppy Bush nor have they appeared in any articles or books – and Barbara herself says nothing about this. On the evening of November 21, 1963, Poppy Bush spoke to a gathering of the American Association of Oil Drilling Contractors (AAODC) at the Sheraton Hotel in Dallas. Since Zeppa himself was a former president of AAODC, it is likely that he attended that gathering. It is also likely that both Zeppa and the Bushes actually spent the night in Dallas – and that they were in Dallas the next morning: the day that Kennedy was assassinated.

This brings us to the vexing question of Poppy’s motive in calling the FBI at 1.45 p.m. on November 22, to identify James Parrott as a possible suspect in the president’s murder, and to mention that he, George H. W. Bush, happened to be in Tyler, Texas. He told the FBI that he expected to spend the night of November 22 at the Sheraton Hotel in Dallas – but instead, after flying to Dallas on Zeppa’s plane,

he left again almost immediately on a commercial flight to Houston. Why state that he expected to spend the night at the Dallas Sheraton if he was not planning to stay? Perhaps this was to create a little confusion, to blur the fact that he had *already* stayed at the hotel – the night before. Anyone inquiring would learn that Bush was in Tyler at the time of the assassination and *planned* to stay in Dallas afterward, but canceled his plan following JFK's death.



A Tip from Poppy

As curious as all that is, nothing is quite so odd as the object of Bush's patriotic duty. Nobody seems to have believed that James Parrott had the capability – or even the inclination – to assassinate Kennedy. Bush acknowledged in the tip-off call that he had no personal knowledge of anything. He passed the buck to others who supposedly knew more about the threat and about Parrott – though what those others knew, if anything, has never emerged, until now.

During the period Bush ran the Harris County Republican organization, it had no more than a handful of employees. Among those were the two women he had mentioned to the FBI as potential sources on Parrott's alleged threat ("Mrs. Fawley" and "Arline Smith"), and a sole male – by the name of Kearney Reynolds. Though Bush made no mention of Reynolds, he was in fact the one who was most closely connected to Parrott.

Shortly after receiving Bush's call, the FBI dispatched agents to the Parrott house. At the time, Parrott was away, but according to a bureau report, his mother provided an alibi – likely in a motherly attempt to protect her son – which Parrott himself would later refute in his own explanation of the day's events.

She advised [James Parrott] had been home all day helping her care for her son Gary Wayne Parrott whom they brought home from the hospital yesterday. [Mrs. Parrott's other son could not help, because he was in jail.]

She also mentioned another person who could provide an alibi.

Mrs. Parrott advised that shortly after 1:00 p.m. a Mr. Reynolds came by their home to advise them of the death of President Kennedy, and talked to her son James Parrott about painting some signs at Republican Headquarters on Waugh Drive.

In reality, both Reynolds and James Parrott put the visit between 1:30 and 1:45 p.m. The president's death became public at 1:38 p.m. central time, when CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite read an Associated Press news flash. Poppy Bush's call to the FBI followed seven minutes later.

Sometime later that day, agents interviewed Parrott himself. Parrott stated that he had never made any threats against Kennedy and that he had no knowledge of the assassination beyond what he had learned in news accounts. He indicated the extent of his dissent: picketing members of the Kennedy

administration when they came to town. In a 1993 interview, Parrott stated that Reynolds had come to his home to ask him to paint some signs for the Republican headquarters – and informed him of the president’s death. Parrott also provided the FBI with Reynold’s first name and said that both were members of the Young Republicans.

The following day, agents interviewed Kearney Reynolds.

On November 23, 1963, Mr. Kearney Reynolds, 233 Red Ripple Road, advised he is a salaried employee of the Harris County Republican Party. He advised at approximately 1:30 p.m., November 22, 1963, he went to the home of James Parrott, 711 Park, and talked to Parrott for a few minutes. He advised he could vouch for Parrott’s presence at 1711 Park between 1:30 p.m. and 1:45 p.m. on November 22, 1963.

What is so remarkable about all this is that at the precise moment when Poppy was calling the FBI with his “tip” about a possible suspect about whom he could offer few details, Poppy’s own assistant was at the suspect’s home, transacting business with him on behalf of Poppy. Clearly Parrott was far better known to Poppy than he let on. Why was Reynolds supposed to go to Parrott’s house at this time? The net effect was that Reynolds bailed Parrott out, by providing him with an alibi. Thus Parrott became Poppy’s alibi, and Poppy’s assistant became Parrott’s. Everyone was taken care of. While the point was to generate two separate alibis, drawing attention to their interconnectedness was problematic. Because when the full picture emerges, the entire affair appears as a ruse to create a paper trail clearing Poppy, should that become necessary. Parrott was merely a distraction and a minor casualty, albeit a person who ought not face lasting consequences or attract undue attention.

(Recent efforts to speak with Parrott were unsuccessful. All telephone numbers associated with the Parrott family, including James Parrott, his mother, brother, nieces, and nephews are disconnected, and no current information on any of them is readily obtainable.)

In 2007, I interviewed Kearney Reynolds. In the interview – which did not initially touch on the FBI report – Reynolds exhibited an excellent memory for detail and extensive knowledge from that period, as the Republicans challenged the Democratic monopoly in Texas politics. He described the politics of the period, Bush’s chairmanship, and the operation of the Republican headquarters – which he said Bush had relocated into an old house in the Montrose section of Houston, a property that Reynolds said the staff dubbed “the Haunted House.”

With prompting, Reynolds confirmed that, due to the temporary absence of an executive director, he was the only full-time male employee, along with a secretary and perhaps a receptionist. He coordinated precinct chairpersons and other volunteers, and thus was the main person to have contact with people like Parrott.

I asked him if he had heard or read of Bush’s call from Tyler to the FBI regarding a threat to Kennedy. Reynolds said he was unaware of it. However, he did then offer, almost as an afterthought, his recollection, not of visiting Parrott that day, but of being asked to accompany Parrott down to the office of the Secret Service:

There was a young man who came around headquarters . . . and somebody said that he had made a threat against Kennedy and this was, I believe, this came up after the assassination . . . The end result was, it was suggested that I contact the Secret Service, the local Secret Service, and I accompanied this young man . . . And we went down, and this was kind of a strange kid, mild-mannered, quiet, kind of seemed to be living in another world, and I took him down one day, escorted him down there.

At that point in our conversation, I shared with Reynolds the details of the FBI report (including Parrott’s name), which stated explicitly that Reynolds had actually visited Parrott at home at around

1:30 p.m. on November 22, or precisely the time that Poppy Bush was calling the FBI.

Well I never went to the guy's house because, as I remember, the little episode that I mentioned – as I recall, I met him at the headquarters, and we went on downtown to the Secret Service office.

Asked why he would even be accompanying a man whom he said he did not know well – and whom his own boss believed to have threatened the life of the president – to the Secret Service office, Reynolds replied that he did not know, but only perhaps because Bush himself was out of town: “I worked a great deal with the volunteers and the precinct chairman, and probably on a face-to-face, name-to-name basis, probably knew more of them than almost anybody else.”

At that point, Reynolds said his memory had been refreshed. “I knew him by name and sight . . . It was just sort of a casual [acquaintance] within the context of working at the headquarters.” Reynolds mentioned that many of the volunteers were women, so presumably Parrott stood out.

After I read him a portion of the FBI memo, more recollections came back.

I seem to remember that some of this did brew up before the Kennedy assassination. . . . Kennedy came to Houston, I think on a Thursday night, and he was assassinated on Friday morning.

Reynolds says he was asked to attend an event Thursday night at the home of a party activist named Marjorie Arsht.

There was some kind of little social-political thing at her house, and I was asked to be there and watch Parrott, which I think I did. And again this is conditional because my memory is just not that good. Now, but I do remember the following day or the day after or whatever after the assassination, that somebody called me and asked if I was with Parrott that night or whatever, and I answered yes. I think I remember that.

I asked him why they wanted him to watch Parrott. “I don’t know,” said Reynolds hesitantly.

He was just – he wasn’t your everyday campus guy. He just seemed kind of distant and remote – quiet, polite, soft spoken, but didn’t talk much and just seemed distant. Now who or to what extent other people talked to him or perceived him to be a little on the edge, I don’t know.

He went on to describe people who would come into the headquarters and rant for two hours on some pet topic, like a return to the gold standard, and why you might want to keep an eye on such a person. But then he agreed that Parrott was not such a person.

In fact, as the FBI report reveals, he was quite harmless – barely able to fend for himself. He had only a seventh grade education, had been discharged from the Air force by a psychiatrist, gone into sign-painting, lived with his mother, and apparently volunteered regularly with the Harris County GOP quietly and without incident.

Until the Bush phone call.

No Harm Done

The cumulative result was that Poppy was listed in government files as having been in Tyler on November 22, 1963 – while Parrott faced no long-term consequences for having been secretly accused.

In the aforementioned 1993 interview, Parrott would insist that for many years he had been unaware that it was Bush who had made the accusation against him. He also noted that he had actually gone on to work for Bush’s unsuccessful presidential reelection campaign in 1992. In an article covering the frenzied GOP-convention podium attacks on the Clinton-Gore team over family values, Parrott is

described as passing out flyers saying, “No queers or baby killing,” while wearing a plastic shield over his face, explaining that it was protection against the AIDS virus.

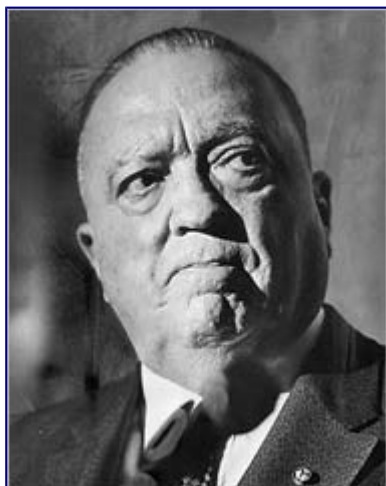
As time passed, Parrott increasingly told a story that meshed with Bush’s, inflating his own significance along the lines of what the Bush forces were putting out. “It was mainly a rumor put out by those trying to neutralize us,” he said in the 1993 interview, claiming that he and other conservatives were in the middle of a bitter struggle with Bush and other “moderates” over the need to go after those suspected of Communist activities.

That said, the notion that Parrott was active in any sort of aggressive rightist circles seems either untrue or irrelevant to what actually happened on November 22. More likely, Parrott was simply set up, his right-wing ideology used as a red herring by Poppy to legitimate his phone call. After all, if Parrott did not have an ideological motivation to kill Kennedy, why would he be considered a threat?

Another curiosity: either the FBI agent who took Bush’s phone call, or Bush himself, misspelled the surnames of the two supposed witnesses whom Bush said would know more about Parrott. To be sure, if the phone numbers provided for them were correct, the FBI would be able to find them. But years later, researchers who tried had difficulty figuring out who those people were – or how to track them down. In fact, only extensive cross-referencing reveals that “Mrs. Fawley” is actually a Mrs. *Thawley*. And “Arline Smith” turns out to be *Aleene* Smith.

These were either mistakes or deliberate errors; in any case, it is reminiscent of the way Barbara Bush mangled their friend Mr. Zeppa’s name in her letter. George Bush knew both of these women well. Nancy Brelsford Thawley was vice chair of the Harris County Republican Party, and Aleene Smith was a well-known Texas Republican activist who worked for Bush at Zapata Offshore; both women remained with Bush for many years thereafter, accompanying him to Washington. Bush should have at least known how to spell their name.

The background of the FBI agent is also of note. Graham Kitchel was unusually close to J. Edgar Hoover, and his record is full not only of commendations from the head of the vast organization but also of personal notes, including a get-well card in 1963 from Hoover after Kitchel underwent surgery. In addition, in a 1990s interview, Kitchel’s brother George, an offshore oil engineer, explained that he, George Kitchel, was an old friend of George H.W. Bush.

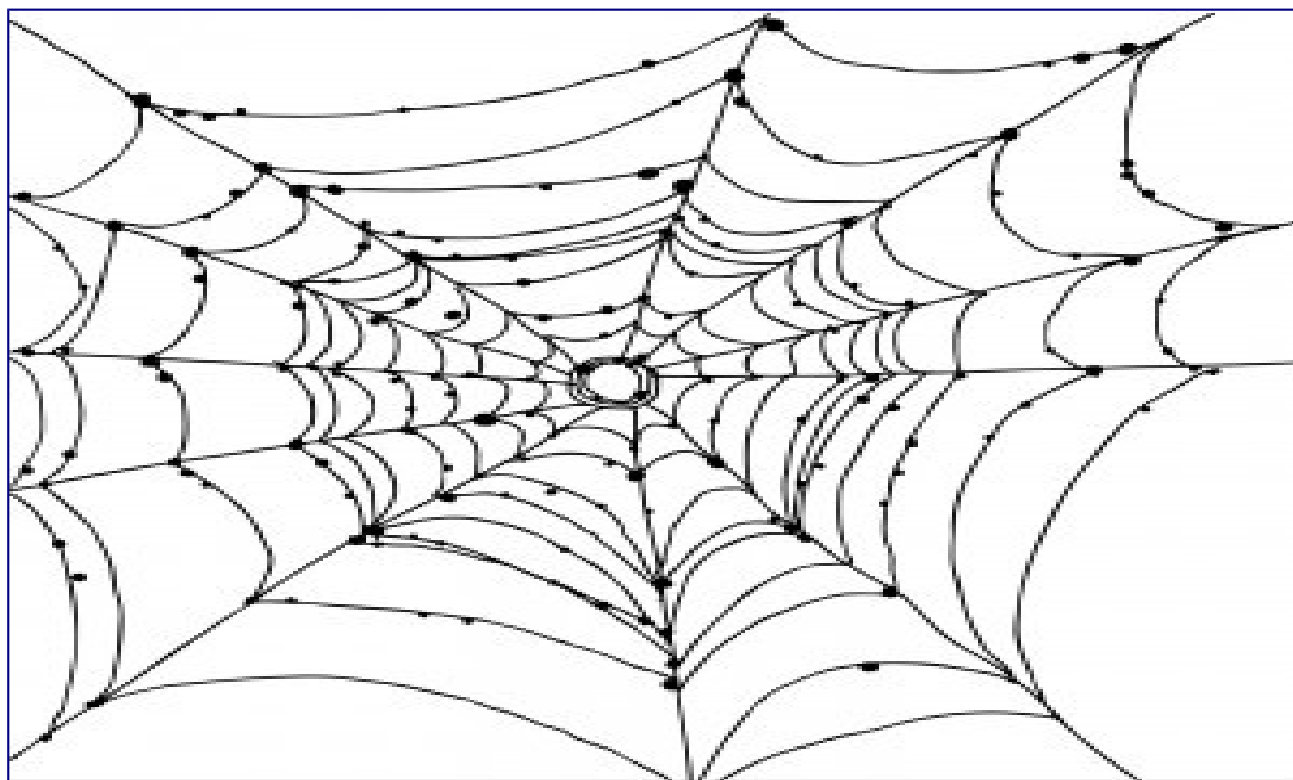


J. Edgar Hoover: The Hoover-Kitchel-Bush connection is intriguing

In summary, then, Bush called in a pointless tip about an innocent fellow to an FBI agent whom he knew, and whom he knew could be counted on to file a report on this tip – out of what may have been hundreds of calls, some of them not even worthy of documenting. And, after a cursory investigation,

the tip was confirmed as useless. But the call itself was hardly without value. It established for the record, if anyone asked, that Poppy Bush was not in Dallas when Kennedy was shot. By pointing to a seemingly harmless man who lived with his mother, Bush appeared to establish his own Pollyannaish ignorance of the larger plot.

While Parrott had eyewitnesses to his being in Houston before, after, and *at the time of* a shooting that took place 240 miles away, Bush had Kiwanis eyewitnesses to where he was at around 12:30, the time of the shooting and the scheduled time of his luncheon speech.



Oh what a tangled web we weave...

The big mystery, of course, is the call to the FBI. Bush clearly made the call; Parrott clearly was never any threat. Therefore, Poppy Bush was willing to divert the investigative resources of the FBI on one of the busiest days in its history. Beyond that are the baffling particulars: Why did Bush have one of his people visit Parrott's house almost exactly as Poppy was fingering Parrott as a possible suspect? And why was Bush so determined to establish his presence in Tyler that day – and to document, as it were, his concern for Kennedy's well-being? Why was Parrott so unperturbed to have been falsely accused by Poppy Bush?

The answer may lie in Poppy's mention to the FBI that he would be traveling next from Tyler to Dallas, and that he would be staying at the Sheraton. This was, in fact, akin to a magician's trick – drawing the audience's attention slightly from the real action. In truth, Poppy had *already been* at the Sheraton in Dallas – the night before, speaking to the AAODC convention. By telling the FBI that he was *planning* to go there, he created a misleading paper trail suggesting that his stay in Dallas was many hours after Kennedy's shooting, rather than a few hours before.

In fact although he did travel from Tyler to Dallas, he stayed only briefly, did not stay at the Sheraton this time, and went right back to Houston. The Parrott call served no purpose besides manufacturing a reason to create a government record of his presence in Tyler and his plan to go to Dallas later on the

22nd. Once Parrott had served, however unwittingly, his purpose, there was no reason for him to suffer – hence, Reynolds’s visit to Parrott’s house around the time of the assassination, which effectively created an alibi clearing Parrott. In other words, no harm done.

As for the reference to the Ulmers in Barbara’s letter, why risk introducing so controversial a person? Like Bush’s use of Joe Zeppa’s plane, it helped establish that Bush had in fact spent time with Al Ulmer. Better to include Ulmer’s wife’s name (but not his) and Zeppa’s name (misspelled) so that should a rare hardy investigator bother to figure out the sequence of events, Bush could claim that he obviously had nothing to hide – after all, there it was (in a way) in Barbara’s letter.

In fact, Poppy Bush had good reason to obfuscate the details of his relationships and his conduct because they would, at minimum, lead to further inquiry at a time when an investigation into the death of a president was or should have been – open-ended. The secrets themselves, and the urgency of keeping them hidden, would become a principal rationale in the family’s political efforts. And as we shall see, they go a long way toward explaining the unprecedented information lockdown and seeming paranoia of the George W. Bush administration – whose earliest acts included an effort to put his father’s records under lock and key forever.

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 5: The Mysterious Mr. De Mohrenschildt

By [Russ Baker](#)

Oct 14, 2013

What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the fifth part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker’s bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America’s Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.

Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 5 come from Chapter 5 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)



For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#); Part 4, [here](#).

“Must have angered a lot of people”

In 1976, more than a decade after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a letter arrived at the CIA, addressed to its director, the Hon. George Bush. The letter was from a desperate-sounding man in Dallas, who spoke regretfully of having been indiscreet in talking about Lee Harvey Oswald and begged Poppy for help:

Maybe you will be able to bring a solution into the hopeless situation I find myself in. My wife and I find ourselves surrounded by some vigilantes; our phone bugged; and we are being followed everywhere. Either FBI is involved in this or they do not want to accept my complaints. We are driven to insanity by this situation . . . tried to write, stupidly and unsuccessfully, about Lee H. Oswald and must have angered a lot of people . . . Could you do something to remove this net around us? This will be my last request for help and I will not annoy you anymore.

The writer signed himself “G. de Mohrenschildt.”



“The Scream” by Edvard Munch

The CIA staff assumed the letter writer to be a crank. Just to be sure, however, they asked their boss: Did he by any chance know a man named de Mohrenschildt? Bush responded by memo, seemingly self-typed:

I do know this man DeMohrenschildt. I first men [sic] him in the early 40's [sic]. He was an uncle to my Andover roommate. Later he surfaced in Dallas (50's maybe) . . . Then he surfaced when Oswald shot to prominence. He knew Oswald before the assassination of Pres. Kennedy. I don't recall his role in all this.

Not recall? Once again, Poppy Bush was having memory problems. And not about trivial matters. George de Mohrenschildt was not just the uncle of a roommate, but a longtime personal associate. Yet Poppy could not recall – or more precisely, claimed not to recall – the nature of de Mohrenschildt's relationship with the man believed to have assassinated the thirty-fifth president.

This would have been an unusual lapse on anyone's part. But for the head of an American spy agency to exhibit such a blasé attitude, in such an important matter, was over the edge. At that very moment, several federal investigations were looking into CIA abuses – including the agency's role in assassinations of foreign leaders. These investigations were heading toward what would become a reopened inquiry into Kennedy's death. Could it be that the lapse was not casual, and the acknowledgment of a distant relationship was a way to forestall inquiry into a closer one?

Writing back to his old friend, Poppy assured the Mohrenschildt that his fears were entirely unfounded. Yet half a year later, de Mohrenschildt was dead. The cause was officially determined to be suicide

with a shotgun. Investigators combing through de Mohrenschildt's effects came upon his tattered address book, largely full of entries made in the 1950's. Among them, though apparently eliciting no further inquiries on the part of the police, was an old entry for the current CIA director, with the Midland address where he had lived in the early days of Zapata:

BUSH, GEORGE H. W. (POPPY), 1412 W. OHIO ALSO ZAPATA PETROLEUM MIDLAND.

De Mohrenschildt and the Oswalds

When Poppy told his staff that his old friend de Mohrenschildt "knew Oswald," that was an understatement. From 1962 through the spring of 1963, de Mohrenschildt was by far the principal influence on Oswald, the older man who guided every step of his life. De Mohrenschildt had helped Oswald find jobs and apartments, had taken him to meetings and social gatherings, and generally had assisted with the most minute aspects of life for Lee Oswald, his Russian wife, Marina, and their baby.



Lee Harvey Oswald, 1961



Marina Oswald

De Mohrenschildt's relationship with Oswald has tantalized and perplexed investigators and researchers for decades. In 1964, de Mohrenschildt and his wife Jeanne testified to the Warren Commission, which spent more time with them than any other witness – possibly excepting Oswald's widow, Marina. The Commission, though, focused on George de Mohrenschildt as a colorful, if eccentric, character, steering away every time de Mohrenschildt recounted yet another name from a staggering list of influential friends and associates. In the end, the commission simply concluded in its final report that these must all be coincidences and nothing more. The de Mohrenschildts, the Commission said, apparently had nothing to do with the assassination.



George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt

Even the Warren Commission counsel who questioned George de Mohrenschildt appeared to acknowledge that the Russian émigré was what might euphemistically be called an “international businessman.” For most of his adult life, de Mohrenschildt had traveled the world ostensibly seeking business opportunities involving a variety of natural resources – some, such as oil and uranium, of great strategic value. The timing of his overseas ventures was remarkable. Invariably, when he was passing through town, a covert or even overt operation appeared to be unfolding – an invasion, a coup, that sort of thing. For example, in 1961, as exiled Cubans and their CIA support team prepared for the Bay of Pigs invasion in Guatemala, George de Mohrenschildt and his wife passed through Guatemala City on what they told friends was a month-long walking tour of the Central American isthmus. On another occasion, the de Mohrenschildts appeared in Mexico on oil business just as a Soviet leader arrived on a similar mission – and even happened to meet the Communist official. In a third instance, they landed in Haiti shortly before an unsuccessful coup against its president that had U.S. fingerprints on it.

A Russian-born society figure was a friend both of the family of President Kennedy and his assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. A series of strange coincidences providing the only known link between the two families before Oswald fired the shot killing Mr. Kennedy in Dallas a year ago was described in testimony before The Warren Commission by George S. de Mohrenschildt.

He was actually much more intriguing – and mystifying. As Norman Mailer noted in his book *Oswald's Tale*, de Mohrenschildt possessed “an eclecticism that made him delight in presenting himself as right-wing, left-wing, a moralist, an aristocrat, a nihilist, a snob, an atheist, a Republican, a Kennedy lover, a desegregationist, an intimate of oil tycoons, a bohemian, and a socialite, plus a quondam Nazi apologist, once a year.”

A Name Never Dropped

During all these examinations, and notwithstanding de Mohrenschildt's offhand recitation of scores of friends and colleagues, obscure and recognizable, he scrupulously never mentioned that he knew Poppy Bush. Nor did investigators uncover the fact that in the spring of 1963, immediately after his final communication with Oswald, de Mohrenschildt had traveled to New York and Washington for meetings with CIA and military intelligence officials. He even had met with a top aide to Vice President Johnson. And the commission certainly did not learn that one meeting in New York included Thomas Devine, then Bush's business colleague in Zapata Offshore, who was doing double duty for the CIA.

Had the Warren Commission's investigators comprehensively explored the matter, they would have found a phenomenal and baroque backstory that contextualizes de Mohrenschildt within the extended petroleum-intelligence orbit in which the Bushes operated.

Getting America Into World War I

The de Mohrenschildts were major players in the global oil business since the beginning of the twentieth century, and their paths crossed with the Rockefellers and other key pillars of the petroleum establishment. George de Mohrenschildt's uncle and father ran the Swedish Nobel Brothers Oil Company's operations in Baku, in Russian Azerbaijan on the southwestern coast of the Caspian Sea. This was no small matter. In the early days of the twentieth century, the region held roughly half of the world's known oil supply. By the start of World War I, every major oil interest in the world, including the Rockefellers' Standard Oil, was scrambling for a piece of Baku's treasure or intriguing to suppress its competitive potential. (Today, ninety years later, they are at it again.)

In 1915, the czar's government dispatched a second uncle of George de Mohrenschildt, the handsome young diplomat Ferdinand von Mohrenschildt, to Washington to plead for American intervention in the war – an intervention that might rescue the czarist forces then being crushed by the invading German army. President Woodrow Wilson had been reelected partly on the basis of having kept America out of the war. But as with all leaders, he was surrounded by men with their own agendas. A relatively close-knit group embodying the nexus of private capital and intelligence-gathering inhabited the highest levels of the Wilson administration. Secretary of State Robert Lansing was the uncle of a diplomat-spy by the name of Allen Dulles. Wilson's closest adviser, "Colonel" Edward House, was a Texan and an ally of the ancestors of James A. Baker III, who would become Poppy Bush's top lieutenant. Czarist Russia then owed fifty million dollars to a Rockefeller-headed syndicate. Keeping an eye on such matters was the U.S. ambassador to Russia, a close friend of George Herbert Walker's from St. Louis.



Allen Dulles during WW I

Once the United States did enter the war, Prescott Bush's father, Samuel Bush, was put in charge of small arms production. The Percy Rockefeller-headed Remington Arms Company got the lion's share of the U.S. contracts. It sold millions of dollars worth of rifles to czarist forces, while it also profited handsomely from deals with the Germans.

In 1917, Ferdinand von Mohrenschildt's mission to bring America into the world war was successful on a number of levels. Newspaper clippings of the time show him to be an instant hit on the Newport, Rhode Island, millionaires' circuit. He was often in the company of Mrs. J. Borden Harriman, of the family then befriending Prescott Bush and about to hire Prescott's future father-in-law, George Herbert Walker. Not long after that, Ferdinand married the step-granddaughter of President Woodrow Wilson.



Prescott Bush



Prescott Bush, Dorothy Walker Bush

In quick succession, the United States entered World War I, and the newlywed Ferdinand unexpectedly died. The von Mohrenschildt family fled Russia along with the rest of the aristocracy. Emanuel Nobel

sold half of the Baku holdings to Standard Oil of New Jersey, with John D. Rockefeller Jr. personally authorizing the payment of \$11.5 million. Over the next couple of decades, members of the defeated White Russian movement, which opposed the Bolsheviks and fought the Red Army from the 1917 October Revolution until 1923, would find shelter in the United States, a country that shared the anti-Communist movement's ideological sentiments.



What the von Mohrenschildts escaped.

Bush and de Mohrenschildt Families: Deeply Intertwined

In 1920, Ferdinand's nephew Dimitri von Mohrenschildt, the older brother of George, arrived in the United States and entered Yale University. His admission was likely smoothed by the connections of the Harriman family, which soon persuaded the Bolshevik Russian government to allow them to reactivate the Baku oilfields. At that point, the Harriman operation was being directed by the brilliant international moneyman George Herbert Walker, the grandfather of Poppy Bush.



Baku Oil Rigs by Konstantin Bogachevsky

The Soviets had expropriated the assets of the Russian ruling class, not least the oil fields. Though ultimately willing to cooperate with some Western companies, the Communists had created an army of angry White Russian opponents, who vowed to exact revenge and regain their holdings. This group, trading on an American fascination with titles, was soon ensconced in (and often intermarried with) the

East Coast establishment. The New York newspapers of the day were full of reports of dinners and teas hosted by Prince This and Count That at the top of Manhattan hotels.

Dimitri von Mohrenschildt plunged into this milieu. After graduating from Yale, he was offered a position teaching the young scions of the new oil aristocracy at the exclusive Loomis School near Hartford, Connecticut, where John D. Rockefeller III was a student (and his brother Winthrop soon would be). There, Dimitri became friendly with Roland and Winifred “Betty” Cartwright Holhan Hooker, who were prominent local citizens. Roland Hooker was enormously well connected; his father had been the mayor of Hartford, his family members were close friends of the Bouviers (Jackie Kennedy’s father’s family), and his sister was married to Prince Melikov, a former officer in the Imperial Russian Army.

While Dimitri von Mohrenschildt clearly enjoyed the high-society glamour, in reality his life was heading underground. Dimitri’s lengthy covert resumé would include serving in the Office of Strategic Services wartime spy agency and later cofounding Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. In 1941, Dimitri also founded a magazine, the *Russian Review*, and later became a professor at Dartmouth.

When the Hooker marriage unraveled, Dimitri began seeing Betty Hooker. In the summer of 1936, immigration records show that Dimitri traveled to Europe, followed a week later by Betty Hooker with her young daughter and adolescent son.

Betty’s son, Edward Gordon Hooker, entered prep school at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. There, he shared a small cottage with George H. W. “Poppy” Bush. Bush and Hooker became inseparable. They worked together on *Pot Pourri*, the student yearbook, whose photos show a handsome young Poppy Bush and an even more handsome Hooker. The friendship would continue in 1942, when both Bush and Hooker, barely eighteen, enlisted in the Navy and served as pilots in the Pacific. Afterward, they would be together at Yale. When Hooker married, Poppy Bush served as an usher. The relationship between Bush and Hooker lasted for three decades, until 1967, when Hooker died of an apparent heart attack. He was just forty-three. Six years after Hooker’s death, Poppy Bush would serve as surrogate father, giving away Hooker’s daughter at her wedding to Ames Braga, scion of a Castro-expropriated Cuban sugar dynasty.

Another Careful Disconnect

The relationship couldn’t have been much closer. Yet Bush never mentions Hooker in his memoirs or published recollections, even though he finds room for scores of more marginal figures. Certainly his family was aware of Hooker.

Poppy’s prep school living arrangements would have mattered to Prescott Bush. The Bush clan is famously gregarious, and like many wealthy families, it puts great stock in the establishment of social networks that translate into influence and advantage. Prescott took a strong interest in meeting his children’s friends and the friends’ parents, as expressed in family correspondence and memoirs. Moreover, as a prominent Connecticut family with deep colonial roots, the Hookers would have had great appeal for Prescott Bush, an up-and-coming Connecticut resident with political aspirations and a great interest in the genealogy of America’s upper classes.

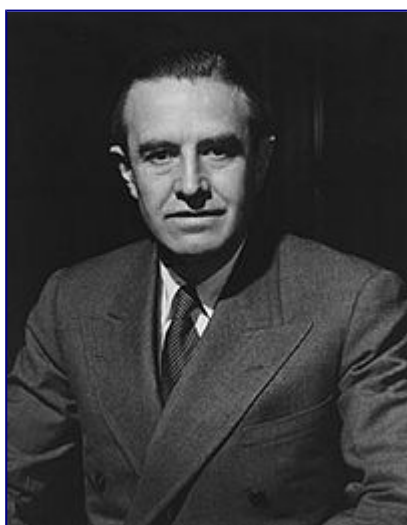
In 1937, Betty Hooker and Dimitri von Mohrenschildt married. By then, Dimitri had been hired by Henry Luce as a stringer for *Time* magazine. Prescott would likely have been keen to know his son’s roommate’s stepfather – this intriguing Russian anti-Communist aristocrat, with a background in the oil business and a degree from Yale, working for Prescott’s Skull and Bones friend Luce.

Meanwhile, Dimitri’s younger brother, George, had been living with their family in exile in Poland, where he finished high school and then joined a military academy and the cavalry. In May 1938, George arrived from Europe and moved in with his brother and new sister-in-law in their Park Avenue

apartment. Young George de Mohrenschildt came to America armed with the doctoral dissertation that reflected the future trajectory of his life: “The Economic Influence of the United States on Latin America.” The oil south of the border was certainly of interest to Wall Street figures such as Prescott Bush and his colleagues, who were deeply involved in financing petroleum exploration in new areas.

From Émigré to Spy

The White Russian émigrés in the United States were motivated by both ideology and economics to serve as shock troops in the growing cold war conflict being managed by Prescott’s friends and associates. No one understood this better than Allen Dulles, the Wall Street lawyer, diplomat, and spy-master-in ascension. Even in the period between the two world wars, Dulles was already molding Russian émigrés into intelligence operatives. He moved back and forth between government service and Wall Street lawyering with the firm Sullivan and Cromwell, whose clients included United Fruit and Brown Brothers Harriman. The latter was at that time led by Averell and Roland Harriman and Prescott Bush.



W. Averell Harriman

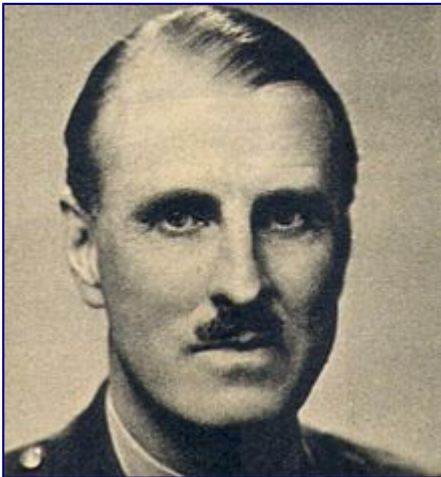
Whether in government or out, Dulles’s interests and associates were largely the same. He seemed to enjoy the clandestine work more than the legal work. As Peter Grose notes in *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles*, he worked during the 1940 presidential campaign to bring Russian, Polish, and Czechoslovak émigrés into the Republican camp. “Allen’s double life those first months after Pearl Harbor [in 1941] had specific purpose, of course,” Grose observes. “The mysterious émigrés he was cultivating in New York were potential assets for an intelligence network to penetrate Nazi Germany.”

Dimitri von Mohrenschildt was a star player in this game on a somewhat exalted level. He found sponsorship for a role as an academic and publisher specializing in anti-Bolshevik materials, and later became involved in more ambitious propaganda work with Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. Younger brother George was more willing to get his hands dirty. He took a job in the New York office of a French perfume company called Chevalier Garde, named for the Czar’s most elite troops, the Imperial Horse Guards. His bosses were powerful czarist Russian émigrés, well connected at the highest levels of Manhattan society, who worked during World War II in army intelligence and the OSS. One of them, Prince Serge Obolensky, had escaped Soviet Russia after a year of hiding and became a much-married New York society figure whose wives included Alice Astor. His brother-in-law Vincent Astor was secretly asked by FDR in 1940 to set up civilian espionage offices in Manhattan at Rockefeller Center. Astor was soon joined in this effort by Allen Dulles.



Prince Serge Obolensky and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, 1975

The next stop for George de Mohrenschildt was a home furnishings company. His boss there was a high-ranking French intelligence official, and together they monitored and blocked attempts by the Axis war machine to procure badly needed petroleum supplies in the Americas. Young de Mohrenschildt then traveled to the southwest, where he exhibited still more impressive connections. Ostensibly there to work on oil derricks, he landed a meeting with the chairman of the board of Humble Oil, the Texas subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, predecessor to Exxon.



Prince Serge Obolensky, circa 1943

The jobs kept becoming more interesting. By the midforties, de Mohrenschildt was working in Venezuela for Pantepec Oil, the firm of William F. Buckley's family. Pantepec later had abundant connections with the newly created CIA and was deeply involved in foreign intrigue for decades. The Buckley boys, like the Bushes, had been in *Skull and Bones*, and Bill Buckley, whose conservative intellectual magazine *National Review* was often politically helpful to Poppy Bush, would in later years admit to a stint working for the CIA himself.



William F. Buckley, Jr.

George de Mohrenschildt's foreign trips – and some of his domestic wanderings as well – drew the interest of various American law enforcement agencies. These incidents appear to have been deliberate provocations, such as his working on “sketches” outside a U.S. Coast Guard station. In many of these cases de Mohrenschildt would be briefly questioned or investigated, the result of which was a dossier not unlike that of Lee Harvey Oswald's. These files were full of declared doubts about his loyalties and speculation at various times that he might be a Russian, Japanese, French, or German spy. A classic opportunist, he might have been any or all of these. But he also could have simply been an American spy who was creating a cover story.

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 6: The Cold War Comes To Dallas

By [Russ Baker](#)

Oct 24, 2013

What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the sixth part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.



Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 6 come from Chapter 5 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)

For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#); Part 4, [here](#); Part 5, [here](#);

A Cauldron of Right Wing Americans, Right Wing Russians, and Nazis



“Oil Girls” by Jerry Bywaters

In the ensuing years, George de Mohrenschildt bounced frenetically around every corner of the burgeoning energy landscape. In 1950, together with Poppy Bush’s old friend and former roommate Eddie Hooker, he launched a modest oil investment firm, Hooker and de Mohrenschildt, with “offices in New York, Denver, and Abilene.” At this time West Texas was the center of a new boom. Poppy Bush was working there in his role as a trainee for Neil Mallon’s Dresser Industries. Meanwhile, a vastly more ambitious enterprise was afoot in Dallas, where Mallon relocated Dresser Industries in 1950. At that time, Dallas was still a relatively modest-size city, but growing rapidly. Once primarily a banking center for wealthy cotton farmers, it had become a center of petroleum finance and home to the new breed of superrich independent oilmen. With help from House speaker Sam Rayburn and Senate Majority leader Lyndon Johnson, Dallas had attracted a number of defense contractors, which made it a growing hub of the nation’s military-industrial complex.

By the early fifties, Dallas contained a small and close-knit community of Russian émigrés, perhaps thirty in all. They were drawn together by business interests, an anti-Communist worldview, and participation in a new church they had founded, though many were not religious. Almost every week they attended social gatherings at one another’s homes. George de Mohrenschildt developed ties with the most important of them.



The man who would be considered the “godfather” of the émigré community was Paul Raigorodsky, a former czarist Russian cavalry officer who had fought against the Red Army. After the Bolshevik victory, Raigorodsky came to the United States with the help of the Red Cross and the YMCA. Like many of the other émigrés, he married into American society at a high level: his new father-in-law had set up the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank. Before long, he was on the oil and military track, with important assignments in war and peace, including some from powerful figures in the Bush-Dresser orbit. Some accounts have him serving in the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA. He also became an acknowledged friend of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. Raigorodsky was a director of the Tolstoy Foundation, a U.S. government-funded organization that assisted Russian exiles.

The second most influential man in the Russian émigré community was George Bouhe, an oil accountant. In the 1920s, while a high school student in Petrograd, Bouhe had worked for the American Relief Administration (ARA), a spy-cover charity that provided food aid to the Russian population via branch offices set up by American executives in various Russian cities. Bouhe’s supervisors, impressed with his work, urged him to come to the United States. He crossed a river into Finland in the middle of the night and traveled to New York, where he went to work for the Rockefellers’ Chase Bank. Then he moved to Dallas, where he became the bookkeeper for Lewis W. MacNaughton, a partner in the highly influential petroleum geology consulting firm DeGolyer and MacNaughton and a board member of Dresser Industries.



Bouhe and Raigorodsky both would befriend de Mohrenschildt and remain in close contact with him during 1962 and 1963. The Russian community as a whole bonded naturally with the city’s right-wing oilmen and bankers, and all clustered together under the remarkable leadership of Poppy Bush’s “uncle,” Neil Mallon. In 1951, Mallon launched the Dallas Council on World Affairs. Under this umbrella, Mallon brought together many of Dallas’s most

powerful citizens, from oilmen and titans of the burgeoning military-contracting industry to German scientists who had fled the wreckage of Hitler's Germany to help fashion weapons against the Communist threat.

George de Mohrenschildt moved to Dallas in 1952, established himself as a consulting geologist, and was quickly accepted into the city's ruling elite. He joined the powerful Dallas Petroleum Club and became a regular at Council on World Affairs meetings. Many of the figures involved in those two entities also showed up on the boards of other influential local groups. One was the Texas chapter of the Crusade for Freedom, a private conduit for laundered money to be sent to "freedom fighters."

The roots of Crusade for Freedom date to 1949. Senator Herbert Lehman of New York, son of a founder of Lehman Brothers, together with a group of associates established the National Committee for a Free Europe Inc. Backed by Secretary of State Dean Acheson (Yale '43, Scroll and Key), this group spawned a subsidiary, the Crusade for Freedom, with General Lucius Clay, which proceeded to launch a series of gigantic annual fund-raising campaigns.



One of the first events it funded was a nationwide radio address by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, urging Americans to support it. The money raised went to entities connected with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which were centers of anti-Communist propaganda, and consequently home to many former Nazis and Nazi collaborators. At the direction of Washington, these entities laundered U.S. government funds (including monies from the CIA) for use by Eastern European insurgents. This was a forebear of later CIA money-laundering operations, including Iran-contra, in which Poppy Bush played a hidden but significant role. Among the European immigrants who were deeply involved in these operations were Dimitri von and George de Mohrenschildt.

Members of the Texas Crusade for Freedom would become a who's who of Texans connected to the events surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In addition to Neil Mallon, members included Raigorodsky, MacNaughton, Everett DeGolyer and Dallas mayor Earle Cabell, brother of Charles Cabell, who was Allen Dulles's deputy CIA director. Another member was D. Harold Byrd, who owned the building in downtown Dallas that would become known as the Texas School Book Depository. Still another was E. M. "Ted" Dealey, publisher of the *Dallas Morning News*, who was a harsh critic of Kennedy.



Allen Dulles in 1953

It was a dense web, and its links went to the heart of the intelligence establishment. Neil Mallon had a direct pipeline to Allen Dulles. Prescott Bush noted in a letter around this time that Mallon was “well known to Allen Dulles, and has tried to be helpful to him in the CIA, especially in the procurement of individuals to serve in that important agency.”

Meanwhile, George de Mohrenschildt, thrice-married bon vivant, finally met his match, literally and figuratively in 1957 when he became involved with Jeanne LeGon, who would become his fourth wife. Like George, Jeanne was Russian, and she had come to the United States and settled in New York City in the same year he did. In one of many extraordinary coincidences, they claimed to have lived next door to each other yet did not meet until years later. Jeanne had been born Eugenia Fomenko in 1914 in Harbin, China, near the Russian border, to Russian parents. Her father, Mikhail L. Fomenko, had run the Far Eastern Railroad for the Chinese government until it sold the railroad to the Russian Communist government in 1925.

Fomenko had needed scouts and informants to keep him up-to-date about his competitors and about regional intrigues. Jeanne’s subsequent secret work in America – and that of her brother Sergei – may have emerged from that milieu. She would later tell the Warren Commission that she and her first husband, Robert LeGon, had fled Manchuria when it was under Japanese control because they feared that he would be killed due to his knowledge of a secret Japanese airfield he had worked on. Eventually they made their way to New York, where brother Sergei was working on the top-secret Manhattan Project with J. Robert Oppenheimer.



Jeanne de Mohrenschildt

In 1953 Jeanne and Robert joined the Russian elite's move to Dallas. Her first job there was as a designer with Nardis Sportswear, which was owned by Bernard L. "Benny" Gold, a tough-talking Russian-born Jew who had started out as a Brooklyn cabdriver and ended up as a titan of the Dallas fashion scene. By 1950, splashy Dallas fashions were all the rage, gobbled up by stores all over the United States, and Nardis was the top of the heap. The store shipped goods out on planes via Slick Airways, owned by the oilman and world-renowned explorer Tom Slick, a Dresser Industries board member and good friend of Prescott Bush. Benny Gold knew everyone; he was president of the Dallas Fashion Center and threw huge parties. When Jeanne first arrived in town, Benny Gold put her up in his mansion.

Gold was an intriguing figure. He joined all the anti-Communist groups as well as Neil Mallon's Dallas Council of World Affairs. He employed people who would prove to have tantalizing connections. While Jeanne designed clothing, her coworker Abraham Zapruder cut the patterns and material. A decade later, Zapruder, by then the owner of his own company, would become world famous for his breathtaking home-movie footage of the Kennedy assassination.

Cuba Sí, Cuba No

During the 1950s, as petroleum reserves in the Southwest declined, oilmen there were looking to the southern hemisphere for new opportunities. George de Mohrenschildt, who always seemed to move at the behest of people of higher rank than himself, turned to Cuba. He later told the Warren Commission that he left the Buckleys' Pantepec Oil back in 1946 after a falling-out with a company vice president. Yet by 1950 he was working with his former boss, Pantepec president Warren Smith, on the latter's new firm called the Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Voting Trust Company (CVOVT). In passing, de Mohrenschildt mentioned to the Commission that the CVOVT had managed to obtain leases covering nearly half of Cuba. He appears to have been telling the truth, but Warren Commission counsel Albert E. Jenner Jr. did not find this remarkable fact interesting.



Center figure: Meyer Lansky

This showed that de Mohrenschildt was no rogue operator or bohemian – as Jenner repeatedly sought to characterize him. Rather he was at the center of a major corporate effort, involving many of America’s largest institutions. Through connections in the Batista regime, the CVOVT had managed to corner exclusive exploration rights to millions of acres on the island. Like all foreign businesses operating in Cuba, it had to work through the dictator’s American intermediaries, notably the mobster Meyer Lansky, who was de facto representative of American “interests” on the island.

The CVOVT never amounted to much besides promising reports and modest production. Still it became a Wall Street darling. Though now almost completely forgotten, on many days in the mid-1950s, it was one of the four or five most actively traded issues on the American Stock Exchange. By November 30, 1956, the *New York Times* had this announcement:

The Cuban Stanolind Oil Company, an affiliate of the Standard Oil Company (Indiana), has signed an agreement with the Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Voting Trust and Trans-Cuba Oil Company for the development of an additional 3,000,000 acres in Cuba. This is in addition to the original agreement covering 12,000,000 acres. Stanolind has agreed to start drilling within 120 days and maintain a one-rig continuous drilling program [for] three years.

This was apparently a big deal for companies like Stanolind, which had no foreign production at all until it went into Cuba. But the CVOVT was about a lot more than just Cuba. According to its filings, it was formed in Havana in 1950 “to assure continuity of management and stability of policy for shareholders of twenty-four oil companies in South America.” That is, it was some kind of holding company with a focus on “stability” in Latin American countries, which could reasonably be assumed to refer to creating conditions of political stability favorable to the exploration activities.

The Empire Trust Company, a New York-based bastion of power and wealth, appears to have played a key role in the financing of the Cuban venture. A short item in the *New York Times* of May 14, 1956, noted:

Election of Charles Leslie Rice, a vice president of the Empire Trust Company of New York, as a voting trustee of the Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Voting Trust, was announced over the week-end.



Empire Trust's John Loeb had a network of associates that amounted to "something very like a private CIA," wrote Stephen Birmingham in *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York*. Empire worked hard to protect its foreign investments and especially its stake in the defense contractor General Dynamics. Empire entrusted its affairs in Texas to Baker Botts, the law firm of James Baker's family. Besides Rice, another Empire Trust director was Lewis MacNaughton, a Dresser Industries board member from 1959 to 1967. MacNaughton was the employer of George Bouhe, the Russian émigré who would later introduce George de Mohrenschildt to Lee Harvey Oswald. Perhaps the most curious of the Empire Trust figures was Jack Crichton, a longtime company vice president who joined Empire in August 1953 and remained through 1962.

Crichton, who had been hired soon after leaving the military in 1946 by oil industry wunderkind Everett DeGolyer, quickly became a go-to guy for numerous powerful interests seeking a foothold in the energy arena. He started and ran a baffling array of companies, which tended to change names frequently. These operated largely below the radar, and fronted for some of North America's biggest names, including the Bronfmans (Seagram's liquor), the Du Ponts, and the Kuhn-Loeb family of financiers. According to his former lawyer, Crichton traveled to the Middle East on oil-related intelligence business. On behalf of prominent interests, he was involved with George de Mohrenschildt in his oil exploration venture in pre-Castro Cuba. In a 2001 oral history, Crichton volunteered that he was a friend of George de Mohrenschildt's: "I liked George. He was a nice guy."



By 1956, in addition to his other duties, Crichton started a military intelligence reserve unit on the side. On the day of Kennedy's assassination, as will be elaborated upon in chapter 7, he would arrange for a member of the Dallas Russian community to rush to Marina Oswald's side and provide translations for investigators – which were far from literal translations of her Russian words and had the effect of implicating her husband in Kennedy's death. Shortly after the assassination, Crichton would become the GOP nominee for governor of Texas in a race against the incumbent John Connally, who had recovered from his wounds of November 22. On the same ticket was the Republican nominee for the United States Senate, Poppy Bush.

Unfortunately for the rich and powerful behind the Cuban oil venture in the 1950s, just as the possibility of extracting vast wealth from that small island drew increasing interest from Wall Street, Fidel Castro's revolution was gaining strength. At the same time, what looks to have been intelligence operations under oil industry cover were moving into position, as Poppy Bush began moving his rigs to Howard Hughes's Cay Sal Bank in the Bahamas.

On January 1, 1959, Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba, and the next day Castro's army marched into Havana.

On November 22, 1959, the *New York Times* reported that the new Cuban government had approved a law that would reduce the size of claims for oil exploration and halt large-scale explorations by private companies. These claims were now limited to twenty thousand acres, a major setback for companies such as CVOVT, with its fifteen million acres.

According to the *Times*, big foreign oil companies had already spent more than thirty million dollars looking for oil over the preceding twelve years. The article cited petroleum industry sources speculating that nationalization of the refining industry was soon to come. The government also imposed a 60 percent royalty on oil production, believed to be the highest anywhere. Standard Oil of New Jersey had, according to the article, invested thirty-five million dollars in a Cuban refinery, and other companies had invested comparable sums.

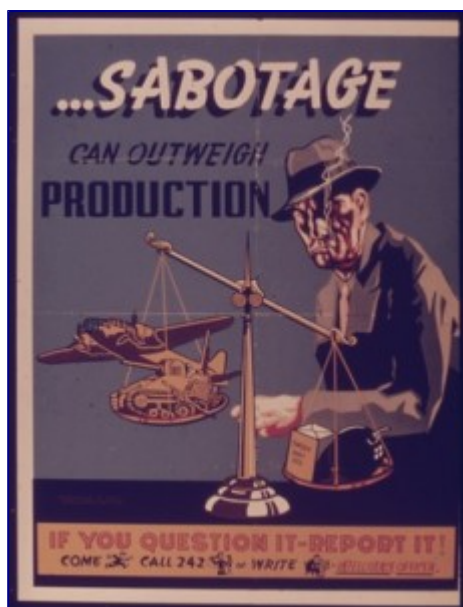
Among other things, the new law put an end to the go-go days of the Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Voting Trust stock. That story was summed up neatly in William A. Doyle's syndicated advice column, "The Daily Investor," on August 14, 1961:

Q. I bought some shares of Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Voting Trust a couple of years ago. This stock was listed on the American Stock Exchange but I never see it quoted there any more. What's the trouble?

A. The trouble is spelled C-a-s-t-r-o. When that bearded dictator took over the government in Cuba, he

started kicking American investors smack in the pocketbook. The Cuban-Venezuelan Oil Voting Trust story is somewhat involved. But its chief cause of grief came when the Communist-oriented Cuban government refused to extend its concession to explore for oil. That just about wrecked this outfit. The stock's price dropped. You won't find the shares quoted on the American Stock Exchange, because this stock was de-listed from that exchange, as of Dec. 1, 1960. Technically, it is still possible to buy and sell these shares in the over-the-counter market. But you'll be lucky if you can get 10 cents a share.

Brown Brothers Harriman also had a stake in Cuban affairs that went back at least to the 1920s. Its affiliate, the Punta Alegre Sugar Corporation, controlled more than two hundred thousand acres in the province of Camagüey. Officials of the firm served on the board of Punta Alegre up to the moment that Castro expropriated this land – and even afterward, as the sugar company began moving its remaining assets to the United States.



Sabotage, one of many OSS skills passed on to the CIA.

The CIA's Allen Dulles responded quickly to developments on the island. He created the Cuban Task force, with teams in charge of clandestine operations, psychological warfare, and economic and diplomatic pressure. Out of these emerged Operation 40, an elite group of Cuban exiles who, after specialized training, were to infiltrate Cuba and deal a mortal blow to the revolution, including the assassination of its principal leaders.

The chief of the task force was Tracy Barnes, a Yale graduate and Dulles's wartime OSS comrade who was related to the Rockefeller clan by marriage. More than a decade earlier, Barnes's first CIA job had been as deputy director of the Psychological Strategy Board, a little-known entity that explored everything from the use of psychotropic drugs as truth serum to the possibility of engineering unwitting assassins, i.e., Manchurian candidates. Later, he worked on the successful 1954 operation to overthrow the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz. Barnes had received propaganda support from David Atlee Phillips and E. Howard Hunt, including the distribution of faked photographs purporting to show the mutilated bodies of Arbenz opponents.

Phillips and Hunt would be hounded by allegations that they had been present in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Both men consistently denied it. But according to his son St. John Hunt, E. Howard Hunt began confessing knowledge of a plot against Kennedy near the end of his life and named Phillips as one of the participants.

Hunt and Phillips attended the first meeting of the Cuban Task Force, held January 18, 1960, in Barnes's office. Barnes spoke at length on the objectives. He explained that Air Force General Charles Cabell, a Texan (and brother of Dallas's mayor), would be in charge of air cover for an invasion, and that Vice President Richard Nixon, whose brief included some national security areas, was the administration's Cuba "case officer."

In his memoirs former Cuban intelligence official Fabian Escalante asserted that Nixon had met with an important group of Texas businessmen to arrange outside funding for the operation. Escalante, whose service was vaunted for its U.S. spy network, claimed that the Texas group was headed by George H. W. Bush and Jack Crichton. Escalante's assertion cannot be easily dismissed: Crichton's role in covert operations, about which extensive new information is provided in chapter 7, was little understood at the time Escalante published his memoirs.



In March 1960, the Eisenhower administration signed off on a plan to equip and train Cuban exiles, and drills soon began in Florida and Guatemala. One of Dulles's top three aides, the covert operations chief Richard M. Bissell (Yale '32), was made director. Around this time, George de Mohrenschildt happened to take a business trip to Mexico City, where the CIA station was deeply involved in the coming attractions.

By the fall of 1962, when de Mohrenschildt was devoting much of his time to squiring Lee Harvey Oswald, he had gained entrée to the crème de la crème of the petroleum world. One longtime buddy of his and of Poppy Bush's, offshore drilling expert George Kitchel, would tell the FBI in 1964 that de Mohrenschildt counted among his good friends the oil tycoons Clint Murchison, H. L. Hunt, John Mecom, and Sid Richardson. Other Commission testimony revealed that in the couple of years prior to the Kennedy assassination, de Mohrenschildt had traveled frequently from Dallas to Houston, where he visited with figures such as George Brown of Brown and Root, the construction and military contracting giant that helped launch LBJ's career, and Jean de Menil of Schlumberger, the huge oil services firm.

Several of these men had even sent de Mohrenschildt abroad on business; one could be forgiven for wondering if these trips were in fact what the CIA calls "commercial cover." George Brown had dispatched him to Mexico, where his mission seemed to be heading off a Mexican government oil deal with the Soviet deputy premier Anastas Mikoyan, who arrived at the same time. Murchison dispatched him to Haiti on several occasions. In 1958, he went to Yugoslavia on what was said to be business for Mecom – whose foundation, the San Jacinto Fund, was later identified as a CIA funding conduit.

The Warren Commission knew at least pieces of all this. Yet in 1964, after two and a half days of testimony by George de Mohrenschildt and his wife Jeanne, the Commission would conclude that George was essentially an eccentric if well-connected figure whose life encompassed a series of strange coincidences.

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 7: Empire Strikes Back

By [Russ Baker](#)
Oct 31, 2013



JFK learns that Lumumba has been killed.

*What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the **seventh** part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.*

Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 7 come from Chapter 6 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)

For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#); Part 4, [here](#); Part 5, [here](#); Part 6, [here](#).

Little is Ever What it Seems

The evidence was mounting that Poppy Bush was not the genial bumbler the public remembered – the bland fellow in the turtleneck who drove a golf cart around Kennebunkport and could never make up his mind.

Apparently Poppy had secrets, and he kept them well. It seems that he had been involved in intelligence work for much of his adult life. He had been in and around hot spots of covert action. And in the fall of 1963, he had for some unfathomable reason been worried that someone would discover he had been in Dallas on the evening of November 21 and seemingly the morning of November 22.

As far as I knew, he had attended the oilmen's meeting and then left for Tyler. Why hide that fact?

One obvious reason is that no one with any political ambition would want to be associated in the public's mind with the events in Dallas on November 22, 1963. But in that case, what does it say about

Poppy that his first instinct was to create an elaborate cover story to airbrush away an inconvenient fact?

It is theoretically possible, of course, that there was something totally apart from the assassination he didn't want known. But given his documented intelligence ties and the fact that figures close to him were connected to the event, the likelihood that his attempt to distance himself from Dallas on November 22 was unrelated to the tragedy of that day seems low.



In the absence of any plausible alternative explanation, I found the possibility that George H. W. Bush himself was somehow linked to the events in Dallas worth pursuing, as a working hypothesis at least. Among the material I had to consider was that memo from J. Edgar Hoover referring to a briefing given to “George Bush of the CIA” on the day after the assassination. I also had to take into account the visit from England that week by Al Ulmer, the CIA coup expert – and that Ulmer had spent time with Poppy. There were still more disturbing facts, perhaps all coincidental, which I gathered and which will be presented below and in the next chapter.

Still, I was unsure how to proceed. I was well aware of the perils of even touching the assassination topic, and as a journalist with a reputation to protect, I naturally had reservations. I wasn't eager to be dismissed as gullible or self-aggrandizing or downright wacky – as I know so often happens to people (sometimes justifiably) who tackle such topics, unless they advance the conventional wisdom or simply point to the “unsolved mysteries” that haunt historians. But I knew I should not, and really could not ignore what I was finding.

So I stepped back. Examining the circle around Bush, I could see it was full of people who had grievances – personal, political, or economic – against Kennedy, and whether or not they wanted him out of the way, who clearly were advantaged by his death.

After the Bay of Pigs disaster, JFK had been blunt about his feelings toward the intelligence elite that had concocted the Cuban scheme. “I've got to do something about those CIA bastards,” he had raged. Heads had rolled, and Allen Dulles, the Bushes' close friend, was still smarting over his firing. So was Charles Cabell, the brother of Dallas mayor Earle Cabell and the CIA's deputy director of operations during the Bay of Pigs invasion; Kennedy deep-sixed his career. Also holding a grudge against the Kennedys was Prescott Bush, who was furious at both JFK and RFK for sacking his close friend Dulles. And there were many others.

The downside of dissembling is that it invites curiosity and the inevitable question: What exactly is the dissembler trying to hide? Poppy Bush went to such lengths, even raising distracting suspicions about a regular volunteer for his Harris County Republican organization and frequent presence in its offices that I felt there had to be more to the story. In Poppy's book-length collection of correspondence, *All the Best, George Bush*, there are no letters in the relevant time frame even mentioning the JFK assassination. Remarkably for a Texan, and an aspiring Texas politician of that era, Bush has apparently never written anything about the assassination. This applies even to his anemic memoir, *Looking Forward*, in which he mentions Kennedy's visit to Dallas but not what happened to him there. Once I began to piece together the scattered clues to what might be the true narrative, I realized that Poppy's

resort to crafty evasions and multilayered cover stories in this incident seemed to fit a pattern in his life. Over and over, those seeking to nail down the facts about George H. W. Bush's doings encounter what might be characterized as a sustained fuzziness; what appear at first glance to be unexceptionable details turn out, on closer examination, to be potentially important facts that slip away into confusion and deniability. Little is ever what it seems.

To get a better idea of what happened on November 22 requires a detour, not so much away from Poppy but rather into the spider's web of connections around him. We start with motive.



How to Win Enemies and Influence People

By the fall of 1963, the Kennedy brothers had made enough enemies to fill an old hotel full of suspects in an Agatha Christie mystery.

There were the many powerful figures under investigation by RFK's Justice Department, and untold numbers of movers and shakers who felt slighted or humiliated by other Kennedy maneuvers. Jack's insistence on Allen Dulles's resignation following the Bay of Pigs debacle was in effect a declaration of independence from the Wall Street intelligence nexus that had pretty much had its way in the previous administration. Like FDR, JFK was considered a traitor to his own class. Also like FDR, he had the charm and political savvy to get away with it. With his wealthy scoundrel of a father in his corner, he could not be bought or controlled.

And of course there was the Mafia, which was desperately attempting to recoup its huge losses after Castro shut down their casinos and exiled or imprisoned leading Mafiosi. After Castro announced in December 1959 that he was a Communist, the CIA recognized its newly found common cause with the underworld and solicited the services of several mobsters, in what became the notorious CIA-Mafia plots against JFK. There was motive aplenty: Attorney General Robert Kennedy relentlessly pursued the mob-tied Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa and a long list of underworld figures.

Then, too, many prominent people nursed more private grievances. For one thing, Jack Kennedy could not keep his pants on. He thought nothing of romancing the wives and girlfriends of the powerful. The FBI tracked many affairs during JFK's brief time in office, but then J. Edgar Hoover was no fan of the Kennedys either.

And there were the Cuban exiles who blamed the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion on President Kennedy rather than on its overseer, the CIA's Allen Dulles.

"A warning to the generals"

Kennedy had campaigned on promises to increase the military's conventional arms budget in order to fight guerilla wars. But he became increasingly wary of the nation's war machine, especially after the Cuban missile crisis. During those tense days, as the nation seemed to drift toward nuclear confrontation, and his military advisers pushed for a preemptive first strike against the missile sites in

Cuba, Kennedy had turned to his adviser Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and said, “The military are mad.” He preferred a negotiated solution for getting the missiles out of Cuba, and he and Khrushchev eventually reached one. This gained them world-wide praise, but it exacerbated tensions for both men with hard-liners in their own countries.



President Kennedy was aware that the Pentagon was deeply concerned about his policies. After reading *Seven Days in May*, a novel about a coup by U.S. armed forces against a president seen as an appeaser, he convinced John Frankenheimer to make it into a movie. JFK even offered the director a prime shooting location outside the White House – in spite of vociferous objections from the Pentagon. “Kennedy wanted *Seven Days in May* made as a warning to the generals,” said Arthur Schlesinger.

President Kennedy also alienated critics over Indochina. Historians still debate JFK’s long-term plans regarding troop levels there, but he clearly worried about a looming quagmire. Here, too, the lessons of the Bay of Pigs applied: the United States could not win without the support of the local populace. Anti-Communist hawks were skeptical of Kennedy’s motives. Some even issued preemptive warnings: “If Jack turns soft on communism, *Time* will cut his throat,” said Henry Luce, the magazine’s publisher, and a friend of Prescott Bush and fellow Bonesman.

Kennedy’s economic policies were drawing additional heat. In Latin America, for example, he antagonized American businessmen, including Nelson Rockefeller, when he interfered with their oil and mineral plans in Brazil’s vast Amazon basin. “Those robbing bastards,” JFK told Walter Heller, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, when Heller mentioned the oil and gas industry. “I’m going to murder them.”

On June 10, 1963, in a speech at American University in Washington, D.C., the president took a direct shot at the military-industrial complex by announcing support for the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which prohibited aboveground and underwater nuclear weapons tests. Kennedy had been stunned to learn of the human cost of radioactive fallout. “You mean it’s the rain out there?” he had asked a nuclear adviser while watching rain fall outside the Oval Office.



“Yes, Mr. President,” the official had answered.

But the nuclear arms race was another bonanza for business – uranium-mining operations in particular. These constituted a growing share of earnings for the oil exploration and resource extraction industry. (Decades later, the George W. Bush-Dick Cheney administration would pull the United States out of the treaty regime that had begun with the Test Ban Treaty. This would be just one of many instances in which the younger Bush fulfilled objectives long harbored by Kennedy’s right-wing enemies.)

Texas had been the center of the uranium-mining industry since the 1920s. After World War II, defense contractors had expanded rapidly there as well, especially in Dallas. The place was thick with people who had serious problems with the Kennedy administration, in terms of both ideology and business interests. It was a combustible mix.

Old Boys, New Money

In the early 1960s, Dallas was not the shining example of administrative efficiency its boosters sought to protect. It was more like New Orleans – spectacularly corrupt, and with forceful elements, from the genteel to the unwashed, jockeying for power. The police force included KKK members and habitués of gangster redoubts such as Jack Ruby’s Carousel Club. Yet Dallas also was a growing bastion of new money and corporate clout, a center of the domestic oil industry, along with a heavy clustering of defense contractors and military bases. Texas was in a sense a feisty breakaway republic with a complicit colony of transplants from the Eastern Establishment. Texas oil riches and



Eastern entitlement, combined with the mix of intelligence and defense, gave rise to an atmosphere of intrigue. The established energy giants had long relied on corporate covert operations to help maintain their far-flung oil empires. Now independent

producers and refiners were getting into this game as well; and the mind-set tended to spill over into politics. A 1964 *New York Times* article reported on a group of businessmen who had formed “an invisible government . . . [that ran] Dallas without an electoral mandate.” The group was powerful and confident enough that it essentially advertised the fact that anyone seeking project approval should come to it, rather than the official government agencies. Politically, the members of this new establishment “begin with the very conservative and range rightward,” the *Times* added.



The Kennedys understood the political importance of Dallas, and of Texas in general. They chose Lyndon Johnson, a fierce competitor for the nomination in 1960, to be Jack’s vice president because they needed Southern, in particular Texan, votes. After the election, they appointed Texans, like John Connally, a lawyer representing oil interests, to be secretary of the Navy, and George McGhee, the son-in-law of Everette DeGolyer, the legendary oil industry figure, as deputy secretary of state. But political accommodation does not necessarily bring affection. Dallas still was not a friendly place for JFK.

Prominent within the group of transplants from the Eastern Establishment was Poppy Bush. As the son of a powerful Connecticut senator, he was unusually well connected, and both ingratiating and indefatigable. While Prescott Bush and Allen Dulles remained anchored in the East, Poppy and “Uncle” Neil Mallon had done well in Houston and Dallas, respectively. Mallon nurtured the de facto power structure emerging in Dallas, most of which worked out of one particular Dallas high-rise, the Republic National Bank Building. A Kennedy rally would not have attracted many people from there, and not for reasons of ideology alone.



Robert F. Kennedy

If Jack Kennedy angered people accustomed to being treated with deference by mere officeholders, his

brother Bobby turned them apoplectic. Where Jack was charming, Bobby was blunt. Where Jack was cautious, Bobby was aggressive. Bobby's innumerable investigations into fraud and corruption among military contractors, politicians, and corporate eminences – including a Greek shipping magnate named Aristotle Onassis – made many enemies. His determination to take on organized crime angered FBI director Hoover, who had long-standing friendships with mob associates and enjoyed spending time at resorts and racetracks in the company of these individuals. Hoover routinely bypassed the Kennedys and dealt with Vice President Johnson instead. In fact, the Kennedys were hoping that after the 1964 election, they would have the clout to finally retire Hoover, who had headed the FBI since its inception four decades before.

Allowance for Greed

President Kennedy demonstrated his willingness to buck big money during the “steel crisis” of April 1962, when he forced a price rollback by sending FBI agents into corporate offices. But Kennedy's gutsiest – and arguably his most dangerous – domestic initiative was his administration's crusade against the oil depletion allowance, the tax break that swelled uncounted oil fortunes. It gave oil companies a large and automatic deduction, regardless of their actual costs, as compensation for dwindling assets in the ground. Robert Kennedy instructed the FBI to issue questionnaires, asking the oil companies for specific production and sales data.

The oil industry – in particular, the more financially vulnerable Dallas-based independents – did not welcome this intrusion. The trade publication *Oil and Gas Journal* charged that RFK was setting up a “battleground [on which] business and government will collide.” FBI director Hoover expressed his own reservations, especially about the use of his agents to gather information in the matter. Hoover's close relationship with the oil industry was part of the oil-intelligence link he shared with Dulles and the CIA. Industry big shots weren't just sources; they were clients and friends. And Hoover's FBI was known for returning favors.

One of Hoover's good friends, the ultrarich Texas oilman Clint Murchison Sr., was among the most aggressive players in the depletion allowance dispute. Murchison had been exposed as far back as the early 1950s – in Luce's *Time* magazine no less – as epitomizing the absurdity of this give-away to the rich and powerful. Another strong defender of the allowance was Democratic senator Robert Kerr of Oklahoma, the multimillionaire owner of the Kerr-McGee oil company. So friendly was he with his Republican colleague Prescott Bush that when Poppy Bush was starting up his Zapata Offshore operation, Kerr offered some of his own executives to help. Several of them even left Kerr's company to become Bush's top executives.

Kerr today is almost completely forgotten, except perhaps in his native Oklahoma. But he was for decades one of the most powerful men in American politics. He played a significant role in the career of Harry S. Truman, with whom he shared early roots as a fellow Freemason and member of the militaristic American Legion. Although the former haberdasher would publicly exhibit some independence, he often buckled privately to Kerr and his like-minded friends. One example was Truman's decision to create the nation's first true peacetime spy apparatus, which eventually became the Central Intelligence Agency.

Kerr-McGee was also the nation's leading producer of uranium, and profited handsomely from the arms race. Even among a cutthroat Washington crowd, Robert Kerr's vicious side stood out – and he did not much like the Kennedys. As an old friend and mentor to LBJ, Kerr had been so angry on learning that Johnson had accepted the number-two spot under Jack Kennedy that he was ready to start shooting. Wheeling on Johnson, his wife, Lady Bird, and Johnson aide Bobby Baker, Kerr yelled: “Get me my .38. I'm gonna kill every damn one of you. I can't believe that my three best friends would betray me.”

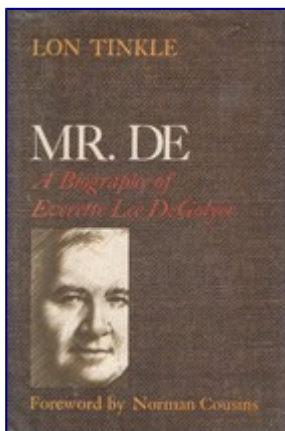
Jack vs. Lyndon

Lyndon Johnson shared in the prevailing oil belt enmity toward Kennedy. In fact, he was the one person in the White House the oilmen trusted. The Kennedys, for their part, had never like LBJ – he had run hard against Jack in the 1960 primaries. They asked him to be Jack’s running mate for political purposes alone. Within a year of the inauguration, there was already talk of dumping him in 1964. RFK, in particular, detested Johnson, and the feeling was mutual. RFK’s investigations of military contractors in Texas increasingly pointed towards a network of corruption that might well lead back to LBJ himself. According to presidential historian Robert Dallek,

[RFK] closely followed the Justice Department’s investigation, including inquiries into Johnson’s possible part in Baker’s corrupt dealings. Despite wrongdoing on Baker’s part that would eventually send him to prison, Johnson believed that Bobby Kennedy instigated the investigation in hopes of finding something that could knock him off the ticket in 1964.

LBJ had numerous connections with the Bushes. One came through Poppy’s business partners Hugh and William Liedtke, who probably knew LBJ even before they knew Bush. While in law school in Austin, the Liedtkes had rented the servants’ quarters of Johnson’s home. (At the time, the main house was occupied by future Democratic governor John Connally, a protégé of Johnson’s.) Another connection came through Senator Prescott Bush, whose conservative Republican values often dovetailed with those of Johnson during the years when LBJ served as the Democrats’ majority leader. After Johnson ascended to the presidency, he and newly elected congressman Poppy Bush were often allies on such issues as the oil depletion allowance and the war in Vietnam.

The Texas Raj, as it has been called, was a tight and ingrown world. Denizens sat on one another’s board, fraternized in each other’s clubs, and intermarried within a small circle, with most of the ceremonies being held in the same handful of churches. Whether one was nominally a Democrat or Republican did not much matter. They all shared an enthusiasm for the anything-goes capitalism that had made them rich, and a deep aversion to what was known in the local dialect as “government inference.” That meant anything the government did – such as environmental rules or antitrust investigations – that did not constitute a favor or bestowal.



CAPTION: Shadowy image of Everette DeGolyer on the cover of his biography by Lon Tinkle

The man who perhaps loomed largest in this world is also among the least well known. His name was Everette DeGolyer, and he and his son-in-law George McGhee represented, to a unique degree, the ongoing influence that the oil industry has had on the White House, irrespective of the occupant. They were also allies of the Bushes. In addition to his consulting firm DeGolyer-MacNaughton, DeGolyer founded Geophysical Service Inc., which later became Texas Instruments, and was a pioneer in

technologies that became central to the industry, such as aerial exploration and the use of seismographic equipment in prospecting. His career spanned the terms of eight American presidents, many of whom he knew; he was also on close terms with many Anglo-European oil figures and leaders of the Arab world. He sat on the board of Dresser Industries for many years, and, as we shall see in chapter 13, played a central role in cementing the U.S.-Saudi oil relationship. Until he died in 1956, DeGolyer was the man you went to if you wanted to get into the oil and gas game. The intelligence agencies sought him out as well.

DeGolyer's son-in-law, the husky and voluble George McGhee, was the son of a bank president from Waco, with a career trajectory similar to Poppy Bush's: Phi Beta Kappa, Rhodes scholarship (offered but not accepted in Poppy's case), and naval service in the Pacific, followed by work in Washington on the War Production Board. McGhee also sat on the board of James and William Buckley's family firm, Pantepec Oil, which employed George de Mohrenschildt, whom McGhee knew personally. Both McGhee and de Mohrenschildt were active in Neil Mallon's Dallas Council on World Affairs. After the war, McGhee served as assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs.

"The Middle East had the one greatest capacity of oil in the world and was extremely valuable," McGhee said in an oral history interview. "When I was assistant secretary of state, I dealt with this issue." In 1951 he spent eighty hours at the bedside of Iran's prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh in an attempt to mediate the terms of ownership for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Two years after their unsuccessful talks, Mossadegh was overthrown in a CIA-led coup. Time and again, McGhee "was on the front lines in the early crises that defined the Cold War," according to Daniel Yergin, author of *The prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*.



George McGhee

McGhee became a protégé of Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, even serving in 1959 as chairman of the Dallas County LBJ for President Club. When LBJ became vice president, he oversaw McGhee's appointment as undersecretary of state for political affairs. McGhee's elevation to one of the top posts in the State Department particularly annoyed Robert Kennedy, who managed to get him reassigned as ambassador to West Germany. McGhee "was useless," said RFK. "In every conversation you had with him, you couldn't possibly understand what he was saying." Needless to say, McGhee did not become a member of the Bobby Kennedy fan club.

In many respects, Bobby became the lightning rod for the hostility that Jack deflected with his charm. Bobby did not shrink from the role of enforcer. For as long as Jack remained president – and in 1963 a second term seemed likely – Bobby would have the sheriff's badge. And even worse was the prospect

that the Kennedys could become a dynasty. After Jack there might be Bobby, and after Bobby, Ted. It was not an appealing prospect to the Bushes and their circle; and it is only stating the obvious to observe that this was not a group to suffer setbacks with a fatalistic shrug.

The Kennedy administration struck at the heart of the Southern establishment's growing wealth and power. Not only did it attack the oil depletion allowance, but its support of the civil rights movement threatened to undermine the cheap labor that supported Southern industry. Yet in the space of five years, Jack and Bobby were dead, and the prospect of a Kennedy dynasty had been snuffed out. Instead, within a dozen years of Bobby Kennedy's assassination, a new conservative dynasty was beginning to emerge: the House of Bush.



Assassination as a Policy Tool

That the president of the United States, not to mention a senator and presidential candidate, could be assassinated by domestic enemies does not sit easily in the American mind. We want to believe in our institutions and in the order they embody. It is unnerving to even consider the possibility that the most powerful among us might deem themselves exempt from the rules in such a fundamental way. Yet, the leaders of these same institutions have frequently seen nothing wrong with assassinating leaders in other countries, even democratically elected ones. The CIA condoned, connived at, or indeed took an active role in assassination plots and coups against figures as varied as Guatemala's Arbenz, the Dominican Republic's Trujillo, Congo's Lumumba, Chile's Allende, Cuba's Castro, Indonesia's Sukarno, Iran's Mossadegh, and Vietnam's Diem. Is it that difficult to believe that those who viewed assassination as a policy tool would use it at home, where the sense of grievance and the threat to their interests was even greater?

One of the assassination enthusiasts, at least where foreign leaders were concerned, was George McGhee, who served the State Department in two places ruled by leaders who became targets: Patrice Lumumba and Rafael Trujillo. As the *Washington Post* wrote in McGhee's obituary: "In the early 1960s, as undersecretary for political affairs, Dr. McGhee was dispatched to Congo and the Dominican Republic when the instability of civil wars and unaccountable governments threatened to destabilize the peace." Some years before McGhee's death, a JFK assassination researcher asked him in writing if he had had a role in Trujillo's death. McGhee wrote back that while he had not, the assassination "was not a problem for me."

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 8: Prepping A Patsy?

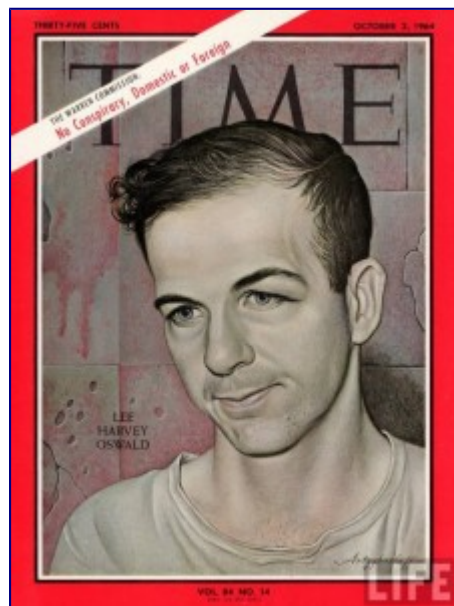
By [Russ Baker](#)

Nov 6, 2013

*What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the **eighth** part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.*

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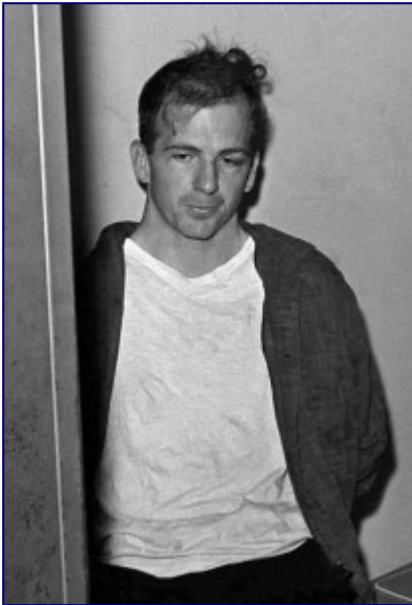
For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#); Part 4, [here](#); Part 5, [here](#); Part 6, [here](#); Part 7, [here](#);



Doubt

For a nation traumatized by the death of John F. Kennedy, the notion that a rootless and disturbed individual could murder the president was troubling enough – but far less troubling to contemplate than the alternative possibility, that the assassination was part of a larger plot.

The arrest and subsequent murder of Lee Harvey Oswald provided, in today's jargon, a grim kind of “closure” for the public, one elaborately ratified by the Warren Commission. To probe into the nexus of interests that benefited from Kennedy's death and its connection to the events of November 22 – well, that would be the opposite of closure. The figure of Oswald, the lone gunman, was a highly questionable fit with the evidence, but neatly fulfilled the psychological needs of the country.



The conventional account goes like this: Oswald, an unstable person who hates the United States, begins showing an interest in Communism and seeks haven in the Soviet Union, where he works in a factory and marries a Russian woman, Marina. Disillusioned by his experience in the “workers’ paradise,” he returns with Marina to the Dallas-Fort Worth area and descends into a spiral of anger and irrationality.

He experiments with myriad political causes, buys a rifle, and travels to New Orleans, where he expresses sympathy for Castro’s Cuba and consorts with a bewildering array of flamboyant and disreputable figures.

He returns to the Dallas area, takes a job along the route of a planned motorcade for President Kennedy, and as Kennedy passes, shoots him. Oswald is later captured, and almost immediately is killed by Jack Ruby, a local nightclub owner with ties to mobsters actively involved in CIA-Mafia plots to assassinate Castro.

Yet even as the Warren Commission was endorsing that scenario, doubts were arising. The lawyer Mark Lane, onetime New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison, and historian David Kaiser all spent years challenging the Oswald-as-lone-assassin theory.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations convened in 1976 and concluded three years later that a conspiracy was likely. Oliver Stone’s blockbuster *JFK* film – which chronicles Garrison’s court battle against the Warren Commission’s findings – led to the formation of the U.S. Assassination Records Review Board.



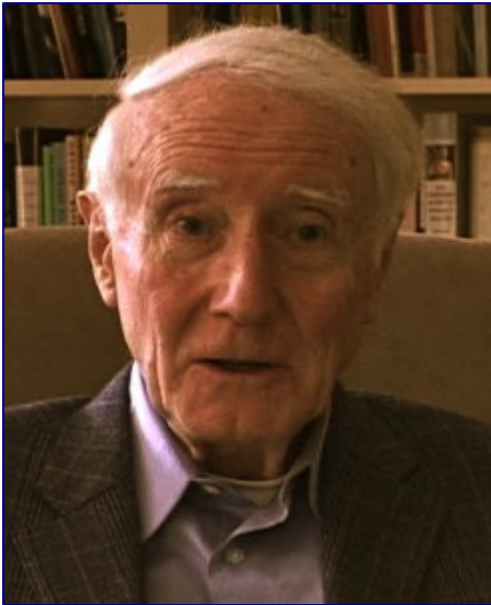
Jim Garrison

When Lee Harvey Oswald told the press after his first interrogation, “I am a patsy,” many dismissed it as the predictable disclaimer of the guilty. But what if it were true? What if Lee Harvey Oswald really had been set up as the fall guy to deflect attention from the real plotters? Most other “lone nuts” who have killed presidents or celebrities have proudly claimed responsibility for their crime, not tried to blame others.

If any group of plotters *were* setting up Lee Harvey Oswald, they would want him to appear as both darkly mysterious and an obvious suspect. They might run elaborate tracks across Oswald’s path, to generate false leads and a thick fog of misinformation. Who would be better qualified to do this than an expert in the game – that is, someone with experience in intelligence and covert operations?

Peter Dale Scott, a retired UC Berkeley professor, has documented that Oswald may well have believed that he was working at least indirectly for a U.S. government agency, perhaps related to the investigation of trafficking in unregistered guns. In his book *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, Scott shows how Oswald’s activities, starting with his return to the United States from Russia in 1962, closely tracked specific objectives of the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

Though Texas laws in 1963 allowed untraceable over-the-counter firearms purchases, Oswald went to the seemingly unnecessary step of ordering his guns through interstate mail, which required identification and left a paper trail. Moreover, the two guns he ordered through the mail were both from companies being investigated by the ATF as well as the Senate. At the time, the ATF was housed within the Treasury Department, not the Justice Department, and thus was beyond the immediate jurisdiction of President Kennedy’s brother.



Peter Dale Scott

If Oswald were connected to the government in any way, he would not have been high-level. Like many foot soldiers in the intelligence wars, he would not necessarily have known precisely whom he was working for, or why. Rather, he could well have thought he was on one mission while he was actually being used for another. If that were so, it might not have been until the assassination and his arrest that he finally grasped the situation. In that case, his words at his arrest might have been the most candid statement in the whole affair.

All this might seem a mere exercise in speculation, but certain facts are clear: Oswald was a young man who craved guidance and purpose. His father died before he was born, and he lived for a spell in an orphanage until his mother remarried (briefly) and reclaimed him at the age of three. Not surprisingly, he seemed eager to find a father figure, escape from his dominating mother, and establish some stability in a peripatetic life that included nineteen moves before the age of seventeen.

His was an upbringing that can often lead to the military, and at thirteen, Oswald became a cadet in the Louisiana Civil Air Patrol (CAP). According to Collin B. Hamer Jr., who served as cadet adjutant of CAP's Moisant Squadron in 1957, and later headed the City Archives collection of the Louisiana Public Library, Oswald was a student of one David Ferrie – a protégé of New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello. A number of Oswald's fellow cadets told the House Select Committee on Assassinations the same thing. Oswald and Ferrie can also be seen together in a group photograph from a 1955 CAP training camp.



Circled, David Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald. CAP camp, 1955.

The Civil Air Patrol was a national volunteer auxiliary to the military. Founded during World War II as a civilian organization, it played a role in safeguarding the American coastline from German U-boats and was eventually shifted to peacetime duties such as disaster relief. Its founders included two Rockefeller brothers and D. Harold Byrd, the right-wing Texas businessman and lifelong friend of LBJ's, who owned the building that would later house the offices and warehouse facilities of the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas.

The Civil Air Patrol was very much perceived as a bulwark of the cold war. A profile of the organization in the May 1956 *National Geographic* magazine noted that in the event of a nuclear attack, "CAP would support Civil Defense with the aerial damage surveys, radio communication, evacuation of injured, and airlift of food and medical supplies . . . [and] radiation monitoring." It's not hard to imagine that the impressionable young cadets might have been targets for recruiting into the clandestine services.

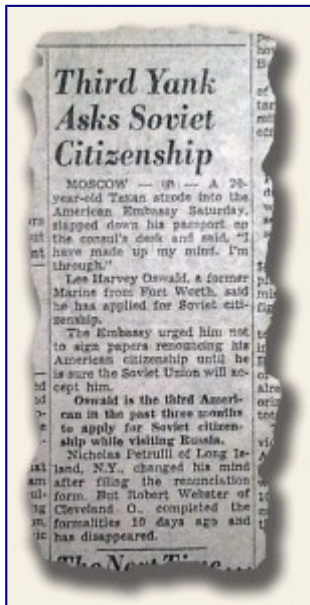
No one should be surprised to learn that the United States ran a fake defector program during the cold war – such intrigue is a staple in the spy-versus-spy world. By 1957, Oswald appeared to be good Soviet bait.



During a three-year stint in the Marine Corps, he had been briefly stationed in Japan at Atsugi air base, from which the CIA launched super secret U-2 spy planes over the USSR. After his return to the United

States, he subscribed to the Communist Party newspaper. Soon thereafter, he was on his way to the Soviet Union as a would-be defector.

It was in the fall of 1959 that Oswald boarded a freighter bound for Europe. After a stop in France, England, and Sweden, he traveled to Helsinki, Finland, where he obtained a visa valid for a six-day visit to the Soviet Union. On October 16 he arrived in Moscow. He visited the U.S. embassy there to dramatically renounce his U.S. citizenship and pro-claim to the inevitable Soviet-installed microphones that he would give radar secrets to the USSR.



Then he moved on to Minsk. In 1961, he met the attractive young pharmacist Marina Prusakova at a Palace of Culture dance and married her just six weeks later. Marina lived with her uncle, who was a colonel in the Soviet Interior Ministry security service; Oswald's marriage to her only added a frisson of intrigue to his profile, raising eyebrows all around. It has certainly been cited as further evidence that he was operating for the Soviet cause.

In any case, the Soviets themselves apparently never quite trusted him. In Minsk he was constantly monitored by the authorities. Later, seemingly disillusioned by what he had seen of the grim reality behind the Soviets' stirring propaganda, he would beg the United States to let him come home.

In fact, Oswald decided early on that he really didn't want to be in the Soviet Union at all. As George Bouhe, a member of Dallas's White Russian community who spent a lot of time with Oswald, would tell the Warren Commission:

[T]he man came to the American Embassy in Moscow asking for the permit to return to his native land. It took 2 years or something to process that application . . . I felt that whatever investigating agency of the United States, whether it is Secret Service, CIA, or anybody else concerned with repatriation with such a suspicious character, took their good little time of 2 years to process his return back to the United States. [He said], "Damn it, I don't know why it took them so long to get on the horse."

The Escort Service

On July 28, 1960, CIA director Allen Dulles, wearing a full business suit, arrived at vice presidential nominee Lyndon Johnson's Texas ranch to administer a top-secret briefing on national security. Such a briefing may have been customary at that time, but the soon-to-be vice president had his own sphere of influence as well – and as the former majority leader, an existing relationship with Dulles. And as would be proven later, he had no compunction about keeping his boss out of the loop.



Allen Dulles's interest in Texas seems to have picked up shortly after he left the Kennedy administration. In December 1961, he contacted a colleague still with the CIA to request contact information for agency officers based in Houston. After the JFK assassination, Johnson would bring Dulles back into government – first as a member of the Warren Commission investigating Kennedy's death and then as a member of the Gilpatric Committee, a group of advisers on the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Since 1961, LBJ had aligned himself with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on a policy JFK was resisting – namely, their desire to send U.S. combat troops to Asia. As a result, Vice President Johnson and his military aide Howard Burris were provided a steady stream of Vietnam intelligence reports that were denied to the president.

About the same time that Dulles was contacting his ex-colleagues in Texas, George de Mohrenschildt was invited to lunch by J. Walton Moore, the local CIA man in Dallas. The Domestic Contacts Service (DCS), for which Moore worked, was the CIA branch that routinely debriefed Americans returning from abroad, including from “Iron Curtain” nations.

According to Edward Jay Epstein, author of several books on the Kennedy assassination, just before de Mohrenschildt died, he described his meeting with Moore. De Mohrenschildt said it had taken place in late 1961 – which would have been about a half year before Oswald returned to the United States.

Moore purposefully steered the conversation in a new direction, the city of Minsk, where, as Moore seemed to know even before he had told him, De Mohrenschildt had spent his childhood. Moore then told him about an ex-American Marine who had worked in an electronic factory in Minsk for the past year and in whom there was “interest,” since he was returning to the Dallas area. Although no specific requests were made by Moore, De Mohren-schildt gathered that he would be appreciative to learn more about this unusual ex-Marine's activities in Minsk.



J. Walton Moore on the left.

In the summer of 1962, De Mohrenschildt heard more about this defector. One of Moore's associates handed him the address of Lee Harvey Oswald in nearby Fort Worth and then suggested that De Mohrenschildt might like to meet him. He added, as if it was an inducement, that this ex-Marine had returned from Minsk with a pretty Soviet wife.

De Mohrenschildt and Moore had met a number of times prior to that, first in 1957 following a lengthy stay by de Mohrenschildt in Yugoslavia, and again after other de Mohrenschildt trips. This pattern raises the question of whether there was a formal reporting relationship between the two at the time de Mohrenschildt was asked to keep an eye on Oswald.

De Mohrenschildt and Oswald are not known to have met until several months following Oswald's return to the United States. The fact that de Mohrenschildt was neither the first nor the last person to spend significant time with Oswald in the interval between his return to the United States and the assassination served as de Mohrenschildt's basis for suggesting that he himself could not have been involved in a plot. But that argument seriously underestimates the subtlety of the people who conceive and execute such plots.

Such people would of course have known that in 1962, when Oswald returned to the United States, there was no better milieu in which to "sheep-dip" him than the Russian émigré community of the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He had spent some of his formative years locally. The émigrés generally were comfortable with the cold war world of cloak-and-dagger and eager to help in anything represented as an anti-Soviet cause. Collecting information on Lee Harvey Oswald – including, if necessary, appearing to befriend him – would have seemed unexceptional.

When de Mohrenschildt and Oswald finally did meet, in October 1962, they must have seemed an odd pair. De Mohrenschildt was bull-chested and middle-aged – an anti-Communist, White-Russian, aristocratic bon vivant. Oswald, by contrast, was skinny, taciturn, allegedly leftist, and twenty-two years old, from a broken lower-middle-class home. His wife, Marina, was the allegedly apolitical niece of a colonel in the Soviet secret police. Yet, despite their differences, the de Mohrenschildts and Oswalds soon became inseparable.

George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt were constantly in and out of the Oswald household, making introductions and offering help in finding housing, child care, marriage counseling, social introductions, and more. A State Department document relates one such example. "Mrs. De

Mohrenschildt took Mrs. Oswald in her car from Fort Worth to Dallas for dental treatment, a week or two after they first met Oswald,” it says. “According to Mr. and Mrs. De Mohrenschildt, they were interested in the Oswalds solely in [sic] helping them as ‘unfortunate people.’ ”

The de Mohrenschildts were devoted to the Oswalds to a truly remarkable extent; never before had they been known to take such an interest in managing the details of other people’s lives. And certainly not people as contentious and purportedly “difficult” as the Oswalds. Neither Lee nor Marina was easy to be around – and neither exhibited much gratitude. It certainly appeared a labor of obligation rather than of love.

A Legend in the Making

More than anything, George de Mohrenschildt helped Lee Harvey Oswald secure employment. Apparently with Oswald’s full cooperation, he subjected the returnee to a kind of reverse laundering. With each pass through the machine, another layer of soil stuck to him.

An improbable sequence of jobs and living arrangements made Oswald seem more and more unstable – not unlike the classic misfits who throughout history have attempted to assassinate national leaders. And because Oswald was involved in such a range of activities in so short a time (less than a year and a half), investigators would later find it difficult to follow all the twists and turns.

Under de Mohrenschildt’s tutelage, “Agent Oswald,” having clawed his way out of the Soviet Union, began dropping hints everywhere that he was a Communist stooge, As Bouhe would tell the Warren Commission:

Oswald had a little table in his apartment on Mercedes Street in Fort Worth. I cannot remember the exact names, but certainly Karl Marx, Lenin and his works, and similar things which I do not remember. And I positively, being aghast at such an assortment, flipped over the first two-three pages, and I think in two out of three I saw the stamp of the Fort Worth Public Library.



A false image of a possibly false defector

Oswald worked for a spell at a mapmaking company that handled classified work, including military diagrams of Cuba. The owner would later explain that a friend had asked him to hire Oswald. The de Mohrenschildts also took Oswald to anti-Castro meetings in Dallas.

This was a prelude to the next step in Oswald’s reverse laundering, a move to New Orleans, where he behaved in a bizarre manner. At various points he appeared to be pro-Castro and then either anti-Castro or a pro-Castro person infiltrating anti-Castro groups.

And there was even Oswald’s purported trip in September 1963 to Mexico City, where he supposedly visited the Cuban and Soviet embassies in attempts to acquire travel visas. Most researchers now believe that this was an impostor pretending to be Oswald – which itself seems to establish a larger plot.

The picture became still murkier when FBI agents were ordered – by some unknown higher-up – to keep an eye on Oswald. Their intrusive inquiries with his employers created yet more static, and helped insure that Oswald's tenure at each of these jobs was brief.

More than half a year before the assassination, on April 10, 1963, someone shot a rifle through the Dallas window of right-wing firebrand General Edwin A. Walker. Marina later told the Warren Commission that the shooter had been her husband, an assertion with which she seemed palpably uncomfortable. She described how, a few days after she heard about the Walker shooting, George de Mohrenschildt had climbed the stairs of their house, calling out, "Lee, how did you miss General Walker?"



Ruth Paine, 1960's

For his part, de Mohrenschildt insisted that he had not actually known whether his friend was the triggerman; he shrugged off his role in the incident as an ill-timed "joke."

Shortly after this, de Mohrenschildt handed Oswald off to yet another person, Ruth Paine, a Quaker housewife who would even chauffeur Marina from Dallas to New Orleans and back. By passing Oswald along to Paine, de Mohrenschildt could truthfully assert that he had been neither the first person in contact with Oswald upon his return from Russia nor the final person in his life before the assassination.

That Paine's mother-in-law, Ruth Forbes Paine, was a close friend of one Mary Bancroft, former OSS spy and the mistress at varying times of both Allen Dulles and Henry Luce, was probably not known to Dulles's fellow Warren Commission members. One wonders what they would have made of this connection, certainly an indirect one yet suggestive nevertheless.

If someone really was "setting up" Oswald, getting him out of Dallas to New Orleans would have been a brilliant stroke. It diverted attention from Dallas and onto a steamy locale with an irresistible cast of characters – the mob-connected ex-G-man Guy Banister, the flamboyant businessman Clay Shaw, and the lecherous gay pilot David Ferrie, to name just a few. Evidence of this is the ample number of books devoted to Oswald's New Orleans period.

Compared with the cast from the Big Easy, Texans like de Mohrenschildt, Poppy Bush, and Jack Crichton would have seemed white-bread respectable. Various middlemen even arranged for Oswald to be in the public eye while in New Orleans – on a radio debate, handing out leaflets, involved in a scuffle that made it onto TV. This opera buffa would later be portrayed as the spontaneous doings of a confused (or incredibly devious) twenty-two-year-old.



Clay Shaw

Layer Upon Layer Upon Layer

The next individual to take a trip through a reverse laundry was de Mohrenschildt himself. Given his connections to prominent people, in particular Poppy Bush, if de Mohrenschildt *was* involved in a plot, it would be especially important to create a benign explanation for his interactions with Oswald. And more important, it would be necessary to demonstrate that taking care of Oswald was not de Mohrenschildt's principal occupation at the time.

In other words, de Mohrenschildt would have needed his own "legend," as a cover story is known in the spy trade. The facts – as they have been presented thus far – may suggest that de Mohrenschildt himself was something of a pawn, steering Oswald but unaware of the larger picture or of Oswald's fate. However, further material, which will be presented below and in chapter 12, suggests a greater degree of knowledge on de Mohrenschildt's part.

That a cover was created for de Mohrenschildt – indeed an oversize umbrella that could encompass all the powerful people he knew – is suggested by a series of events that began right when de Mohrenschildt first met Oswald in October 1962.



David Ferrie

On October 19, de Mohrenschildt wrote to George McGhee at the State Department, offering a slide show of the "walking tour" of Latin America that had taken him – coincidentally, of course – near a CIA training camp in Guatemala just before the Bay of Pigs invasion. De Mohrenschildt indicated in his letter that if the government was not interested in his Guatemalan experiences, he might just

forward the material to some European friends who thought the Soviet Union was a place “where there is a great demand for travelogues and adventure stories.”

Anyone finding this document in government records would naturally assume that de Mohrenschildt was some kind of freelancer of intelligence, if a seemingly goofy one, obviously neither loyal to the United States government nor in its employ. The document would also provide a cover explanation for contacts between de Mohrenschildt and McGhee, mentioned earlier in this chapter as one who intensely disliked the Kennedys and who would be moved out of the State Department by a disrespectful Bobby Kennedy.

On February 16, 1963, de Mohrenschildt wrote to JFK personally, again offering his travelogue. He went out of his way to say that he had also discussed the travelogue with McGhee.

In April, 1963, de Mohrenschildt traveled to the East Coast for a series of meetings that, while supposedly secret, were nevertheless strikingly well documented. Thus, if anyone were to realize that de Mohrenschildt had important connections, those connections would appear to relate to the business transacted on the East Coast, and not to Oswald. Everyone associated with de Mohrenschildt would have a good explanation for why they knew everyone else.

And, to make it more confusing still, this cover story would be layered over another one that was even more intriguing, and that would itself lead to a dead end.

Allen Dulles once called CIA documents “hieroglyphics.” Like the old lion surrounded by his adoring cubs, Dulles used to expound on such elements of tradecraft to his fellow Warren Commission members. On one occasion, he told them that no one would be able to grasp an intelligence memo except for those involved in its creation and their colleagues.

This creates endless, perhaps deliberate, obstructions for someone trying to piece together the story of the Kennedy assassination. When Thomas J. Devine, Poppy Bush’s business partner and a former CIA agent, coyly suggested to me that the problem with journalists like myself is that “you believe what you read in government documents,” he was referring to such deeply coded disinformation.

The Haitian Laundromat

Devine’s warning about CIA documents is especially interesting in light of the way two agency reports from April 1963 portray Devine himself. Both describe preparations for, and then a meeting with, George de Mohrenschildt as he comes to New York from Dallas and then moves offstage to Haiti. At first glance, the documents seem routine. Here’s what they purport to say:

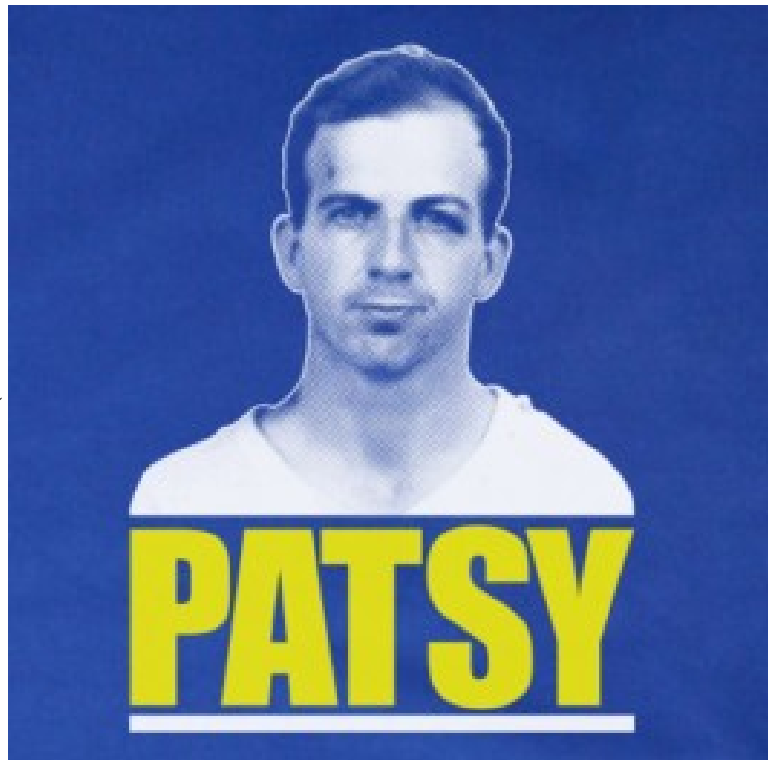
On April 25, 1963, at three thirty in the afternoon, a CIA operative code-named WUBRINY/1 held a meeting in the library of the Knickerbocker Club, one of New York City’s most exclusive men’s clubs, on East Sixty-second Street, just off Fifth Avenue. There were two others present. One was C. Frank Stone III, chief of operations for the European section of the CIA’s clandestine wing. The other was M. Clemard Joseph Charles, the general manager of the Banque Commerciale D’Haiti.

This “contact report” was declassified in 1998 but went unnoticed at the time. The purpose of the 1963 meeting, it said, was to prepare for the impending arrival from Dallas of George de Mohrenschildt, who is described as a business contact of a Haitian banker identified as “Mr. Charles,” i.e., Clemard Charles.

De Mohrenschildt was coming to New York to discuss mineral concessions in Haiti and the establishment of a sisal plantation there, the report goes on to say. It mentions nothing about de Mohrenschildt’s vast intelligence connections and makes only passing reference to his dealings in other natural resources such as oil and uranium. Nor is there mention of his long-standing ties to George H. W. Bush, nor of the fact that he periodically provided briefings to intelligence agencies on his return from trips abroad, as other government records show.

Nevertheless, talking about sisal fit de Mohrenschildt's normal cover: traveling in pursuit of strategic resources. Sisal was used in the manufacture of rope – a critical supply on naval and commercial vessels. Haiti was a good choice because it was of strategic importance to the United States as a point close to Cuba and therefore perfect for monitoring Castro and launching covert operations at the island. And de Mohrenschildt was perfect because he had a prior history with Haiti, having traveled there during the fifties, ostensibly to conduct business on behalf of various powerful oilmen.

The second document describes de Mohrenschildt's arrival the next afternoon, at the New York offices of the investment banking firm of Train Cabot, inside an entity code-named SALINE. This was in fact the covering organization for operation WUBRINY, and WUBRINY's chief agent and operator, WUBRINY/1 – who was none other than Thomas Devine.



(In a 2008 interview, Devine declined to say whether he was involved with WUBRINY, but in a separate 2008 interview, retired CIA officer Gale Allen told me he remembers both WUBRINY and Devine.)

According to WUBRINY/1's report to his superiors, when de Mohrenschildt mentioned his work on behalf of a particular small oil company, he "looked around the room and over his shoulder and said that 'my connection with this is, of course, confidential.' "

Were this CIA report to pass into the hands of, say, a congressional committee, the staffer likely would skim it and move on. Nothing much seems to be happening. Indeed, one almost has the impression that the CIA officer and de Mohrenschildt were performing a piece of theater, with de Mohrenschildt hamming it up a bit with the over-the-shoulder glance.

Or perhaps the officer made that up to enhance the overall effect, which is to establish distance between the agency and this supposed sisal investor.

De Mohrenschildt comes off as a bit of a rube, fooled by the CIA man's cover and believing that a legitimate business deal is on the table. The CIA document casts its own operative, the author of the memo, as dubious of de Mohrenschildt and his motives – and in no way involved with him.

The result is a paper trail that acknowledges contact with the man who was also Oswald's mentor, but in a totally different context, and in a way that permits complete deniability of the Oswald connection.

Bush And The JFK Hit, Part 9: Planning A Nightmare On Elm Street

By [Russ Baker](#)

Nov 13, 2013

Fence on the grassy knoll. Photo by Joshua Dudley Greer

*What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the **ninth** part of a ten-part series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [*Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years*](#). The story is a real-life thriller.*



Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 9 come from Chapter 6 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)

For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#); Part 4, [here](#); Part 5, [here](#); Part 6, [here](#); Part 7, [here](#); Part 8, [here](#).

The Potomac Two-Step

De Mohrenschildt had just spent the last half year in almost constant contact with Lee Harvey Oswald, who had recently returned from several years in Soviet Russia. De Mohrenschildt had done so, moreover, at the CIA's request, or so he claimed. It seems unlikely that the sole topic of the New York meeting with WUBRINY/1 would have been sisal in Haiti. Nevertheless, in the minds of these people, sisal was apparently enough to hang a legend on.

Now there was a documented and apparently benign reason that Thomas Devine (and by implication, Devine's longtime associate George H. W. Bush) knew a man about to be under fierce scrutiny for his own ties to the alleged killer of the president of the United States.

In case the "sisal" document of April 1963 was not enough, de Mohrenschildt next traveled to Washington, DC where he and his friend Mr. Charles met with other government figures, ostensibly to talk about sisal.

Here the story gains a more intriguing layer – namely, the suggestion that de Mohrenschildt's real purpose was to secure U.S. government backing for a coup d'état against the Haitian dictator François "Papa Doc" Duvalier. De Mohrenschildt and Charles appear to have obtained an audience with none other than Howard Burns, military adviser to Vice President Lyndon Johnson, with the prospect of meeting LBJ himself.

As noted in correspondence dated April 18, 1963:

Dear Mr. Mohrenschildt:

Your letter has come in the Vice President's absence from the office . . . I would like to suggest that you see Colonel Howard Burris, Air Force Aide to the Vice President, when you come to Washington. Should Mr. Johnson happen to have any office hours here during our stay, we will be happy to see if a mutually convenient time can be found for you to meet . . . With warm wishes, Sincerely, Walter Jenkins, Administrative Assistant to the Vice President.

The Haitian coup therefore could have been intended as the operative story to explain why Oswald's mentor de Mohrenschildt was interacting with powerful U.S. government figures in the period prior to the JFK assassination. The new story was introduced in 1978 testimony to the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

The witness was Dorothe Matlack, assistant director of the Army Office of Intelligence, who explained that she had also met with de Mohrenschildt and that he raised the idea of the U.S. government playing a role in the coup. "I knew the Texan [de Mohrenschildt] wasn't there to sell hemp," Matlack said.

This story would have been a clever one, since indeed an examination of de Mohrenschildt's past, as noted earlier, shows him periodically in the environs of unfolding coups. Yet Matlack's testimony served still another purpose – besides justifying de Mohrenschildt's presence in meetings with LBJ's adviser and with a CIA operative tied to Poppy Bush, it also justified any ties that would emerge between de Mohrenschildt and Army Intelligence.

That last point, as we shall see, is especially critical, because Army Intelligence figures show up in key roles before, at the time of, and in the immediate aftermath of the assassination.

Indeed, Matlack's story would have rung true. De Mohrenschildt appears to have persuaded the Haitian Mr. Charles that he would be able to secure approval for the coup, and that Charles would be installed to replace Duvalier. It seems that de Mohrenschildt may have been directed to travel earlier to Haiti to persuade Charles to participate in the New York and Washington meetings – because he took a brief earlier trip to the island in March.

What passed for the feeble beginnings of a coup did in fact occur in Haiti, soon after de Mohrenschildt arrived on the island. But it didn't succeed, and perhaps wasn't intended to. De Mohrenschildt and his circle had no apparent problem with Papa Doc, even if the Kennedys did.

Duvalier, who was generally considered a friend by many elements in the U.S. military and intelligence establishment, did not suffer greatly. De Mohrenschildt's "friend" Clemard Charles wasn't so fortunate. The Haitian dictator jailed him for approximately a decade. Thus, Charles himself may have been another unwitting pawn.

Whether or not by design, the Haiti story served as the ultimate cover. It explained why de Mohrenschildt would know all these powerful people, and did so in the context of a supposed plot to depose a hated foreign leader.

Let's play the tape again: De Mohrenschildt travels to the East Coast in the spring of 1963, on a mission that takes his story away from Poppy Bush, Jack Crichton, and others in the Texas intelligence network. His trail leads instead outside the United States, to geopolitical intrigue that is totally unrelated to Lee Harvey Oswald, the Soviet Union, or what was happening in Dallas. Even if disclosed, this new story would cause no great upset to the American people. Removing Duvalier and promoting democracy in the hemisphere were aims of the revered Kennedy himself.

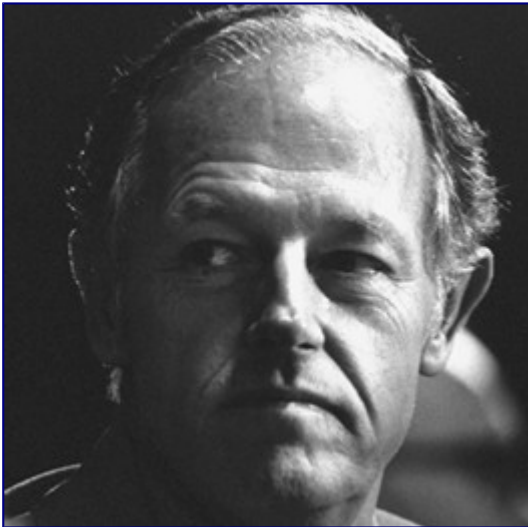
It might seem impossibly convoluted. But in the shadow world of covert operations, it would be

business as usual.

Cover for the Domestic Operations Division

There was even cover for the Domestic Operations division, a CIA program that was, on its face, problematical under the agency's charter from Congress, which forbade its participation in any domestic surveillance or police operations directed at the American public.

The domestic division maintained an entire floor at 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue, near the White House. Among its operatives, according to his own testimony before Congress, was Dulles's friend E. Howard Hunt, previously associated with the coup in Guatemala and the Bay of Pigs invasion, and subsequently convicted in Watergate.



E. Howard Hunt

Within hours after Devine met with de Mohrenschildt at the Knickerbocker Club, a Domestic Operations case officer in Washington was creating the legend that the domestic division, like WUBRINY, had no idea who de Mohrenschildt really was. The officer, Gale Allen, requested an "expedite check" of this supposedly unknown character. He got back a report from 1958 when de Mohrenschildt had returned from Yugoslavia and briefed J. Walton Moore of the CIA's Dallas office.

This way, if de Mohrenschildt later claimed he knew Moore, it could be attributed to this innocuous 1958 briefing rather than the 1961 lunch to talk about Oswald.

To anyone who tried to follow this trail, it would appear that domestic operations was unfamiliar with George de Mohrenschildt. Were investigators to dig a bit further and happen upon the reports from WUBRINY, they would learn that George de Mohrenschildt was a self-aggrandizing entrepreneur with a taste for intrigue.

Dig still further, and they would learn that he was a friend of a Haitian banker who had been eager to foster a coup d'état against the evil President Duvalier. Each layer of this plausible cover story would lead the investigator further from the truth.

They even provided cover for the powerful oilmen who sponsored de Mohrenschildt's travels to hot spots, ostensibly to represent their business interests. The Warren Commission reviewed some correspondence that shows meetings between de Mohrenschildt and these oilmen. In every case, the letters purport to relate to sisal, though some of the letters are suggestive of an unspoken alternative agenda.

For example, one 1962 letter, to de Mohrenschildt's Dallas White Russian community "godfather" Paul

Raigorodsky from the oilman Jean de Menil, who himself provided weapons to Cuban exiles, thanks the Russian for sending de Mohrenschildt around, and refers to some idea of de Mohrenschildt's as not being "very well cooked" but does find it "slightly visionary." It is hard to see sisal planting as even slightly visionary.

Yet this was indeed de Mohrenschildt's cover, and it proved effective. There were numerous assassination inquiries in the 1970s, all in response to the failings of the Warren Commission. But none came close to penetrating the layered accounts I have just described. In fact, they did not even sniff the trail.

The Book Cover

One thing seems indisputable. By the time the de Mohrenschildts left the United States for Haiti in May 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald had been turned into a man with multiple personas, all of them capable of killing Kennedy. Oswald hated Kennedy either because he – Oswald – admired Castro or because he was anti-Castro. Perhaps Oswald was angry at Kennedy over the Bay of Pigs fiasco, or else he just liked to take potshots at important people. He was fond of guns, a bit violent, and even sometimes beat up his wife. He was a potential time bomb with a short fuse.

There was something in the lurid saga of Oswald to fit almost any theory, and therefore to confirm none. Whether Oswald was complicit or not in the process, his background and activities had been so muddled that no one would ever figure him out. Or settle for sure whose side he had been on. Or determine whether he was acting on his own or taking orders when he fired at Kennedy – if in fact he did.

Five months after de Mohrenschildt left for Haiti, Oswald obtained a job in a building along what barely six weeks later would be the Kennedy parade route. That building would become known as the Texas School Book Depository. In the years since, there has been endless debate over which weapon fired the fatal shots, whether it was Oswald who fired them, where the shots came from, ad infinitum. There has been not enough attention paid to the building itself and how Oswald happened to be there.

Some theories contend that Oswald – or anyone who might have been directing him – could not have known that the motorcade would pass by the Book Depository at the time he took the job there. But there were only two possible routes through downtown to JFK's destination, the Dallas Trade Mart, and the Book Depository building stood on one of them.



Texas Book Depository Building. Photo by Aaron D. Mitchell

If someone wanted to put Oswald along the route, he could have arranged for Oswald to secure a job in the Book Depository building, then selected the route that passed

by there. Officially, the decision to reroute the motorcade from Main Street to Elm, in front of the Book Depository building, was made only a week before the event – by two Secret Service agents. But that does not mean that a determination of the final route was not made much earlier by someone who could share the information with Oswald or someone connected with him.

In any case, if it was Oswald's intention to kill JFK from the Book Depository, he on his own could not possibly have known what the route would be at the time he obtained his job in the building. Only an insider involved with shaping JFK's trip could have had any confidence that the Depository building would be on the ultimate route of the motorcade.



View of Elm Street from the Triple Underpass. Photo by Milicent Cranor

The Trade Mart was already known to be the likely venue of Kennedy's Dallas luncheon speech, but according to the Secret Service, even if an alternative venue was chosen, there would be a high probability that a presidential parade would still pass right by the Book Depository. J. Lee Rankin, a general counsel for the Warren Commission, said that "to anticipate that this particular location would be a prime location for anything like this . . . is reasonable in light of our conversations with the Secret Service."

The process that resulted in Oswald's hiring at the Book Depository is yet another facet of the story that has gotten short shrift. Usually his presence in the building is portrayed as an accident of fate. Yet recall that the owner of the building was one D. Harold Byrd, a right-wing oilman, founder of the Civil Air Patrol, avid Kennedy hater – and a friend of both Clint Murchison and George de Mohrenschildt. This all could be coincidence, but surely it is the kind of coincidence that invites a few more questions.



D. Harold Byrd

Yet when I began researching Byrd, I was stunned to find that his name did not even appear in the vast majority of books by Kennedy assassination authorities, nor was he even interviewed by the Warren Commission. I found further that not only had Byrd employed de Mohrenschildt at his Three States Oil and Gas Co. during the 1950s, but that the connection went deeper still.

Documents I studied show that in September 1962, just weeks before he began to squire Oswald, George de Mohrenschildt incorporated a charity ostensibly devoted to the study of cystic fibrosis – and put D. Harold Byrd's wife on the board. Mrs. Byrd's role on the charity board would have created a convenient excuse for de Mohrenschildt to have been interacting with her husband during this period. Other board members included Paul Raigorodsky, J. Edgar Hoover's good friend and the White Russian community's godfather.

On May 24, 1963, in Dallas, the U.S. Air Force presented to D. Harold Byrd its Scroll of Appreciation for his work with the Civil Air Patrol (where Oswald was a cadet). Among the Air Force generals he counted as friends was Charles Cabell, Allen Dulles's CIA deputy director, key Bay of Pigs figure, and brother of Dallas mayor Earle Cabell, also a good friend of Byrd's.

So how did Oswald end up working at this building that belonged to a friend of de Mohrenschildt's? The most widely accepted explanation is that Oswald got the job indirectly – via Ruth Paine, the new "friend" who had come to him through the efforts of the de Mohrenschildts, and who was providing a home for Oswald's wife, Marina, and their daughter. Paine purportedly heard about the Book Depository from a neighbor, one Linnie Mae Randle, whose brother already worked there.

But missing from these accounts is that the neighbor's brother had obtained *his* job there just slightly ahead of Oswald. Moreover, the brother had moved from a small Texas town to Dallas shortly beforehand.

Given what we now know about George de Mohrenschildt's close relationship with Byrd, owner of the Book Depository building, and the chain of events that followed, it is plausible that Oswald's hiring could have been deliberately orchestrated through this chain to obscure the underlying direct connection.

Then there is the intelligence background of Paine's family, which was in addition to her mother-in-law's ties to Dulles's girlfriend. There was more to this simple Quaker housewife than meets the eye.

When Marina Oswald was asked by the Orleans Parish grand jury why she had cut off contact with Ruth Paine after the assassination, she said:

I was advised by the Secret Service not to be connected with her, seems like she was . . . not connected . . . she was sympathizing with the CIA. She wrote letters over there and they told me for my own reputation, to stay away.

Is it possible that the brother was hired as a player – or in spycraft parlance, a “cut-out” – who could “refer” Oswald to a job in this particular building? This might seem speculative, but other pieces of the puzzle do point in that direction.

I was surprised to learn, for example, that the building was almost completely devoid of tenants until about six months before the assassination. I was even more surprised to learn that the very name, Texas School Book Depository, is misleading. It sounds like a building where the state of Texas kept schoolbooks.



Dealey Plaza

But in fact, Texas School Book Depository was the name of a private company, which had operated out of another location before it moved into the building on Dealey Plaza in the spring of 1963. Until then, the structure was known as the Sexton Building.

The officers of the Book Depository Company were – like Byrd, Murchison, and their core group – outspoken critics of Kennedy, and also major military buffs. Its president turned out to be one Jack Cason, who was also the long-time head of the local American Legion post, a leading forum for hard-line military views.

The company, like all publishers and distributors of books that shaped the perceptions of young Americans – of all Americans – was of keen interest to the propaganda machinery of the U.S. government, and the intelligence community. Allen Dulles was even a member of the advisory board of Scholastic Magazines, whose publications were distributed to schoolchildren throughout the country.

These operations at least seem to offer a plausible explanation of why a man like Cason, affluent and socially connected, deeply involved in anti-Communist and military-themed activities, might choose to bypass more traditional pursuits such as oil and banking in favor of the textbook distribution business.

The CIA was deeply involved, abroad and at home, in creating and distributing literature that would promote democratic Western values in the cold war battle for hearts and minds. As the Senate’s Church Committee would note: “In 1967 alone, the CIA published or subsidized over 200 books, ranging from books on African safaris . . . to a competitor to Mao’s little red book, which was entitled *Quotations from Chairman Liu*.”

One such book, produced by the Domestic Operations division – the one that was monitoring Oswald – told the story of “a young student from a developing country who had studied in a communist country.” According to the CIA, that book “had a high impact in the United States.”

The important point here is that a division of the CIA was producing general nonfiction books, and it would not be inconceivable that it was also interested in the textbooks distributed by companies such as the Texas School Book Depository.

Allen Dulles even infiltrated that paragon of objectivity the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, whitewashing the agency’s Bay of Pigs fiasco in an article in the 1963 *Book of the Year*.

It is worth noting that D. Harold Byrd, a big-game hunter, decided to take his first-ever foreign safari – to Africa – during this period. That removed him from Dallas precisely when the assassination took place.



D. Harold Byrd on safari, circa November 1963

Besides Byrd’s far-right politics, his founding role in the Civil Air Patrol, and his ties to de Mohrenschildt, he evidently rejoiced in Kennedy’s assassination – as suggested by the macabre fact that he arranged for the window from which Oswald purportedly fired the fatal shots to be removed and set up at his home.

Dulles Does Dallas

As far as we know, on November 22, 1963, George de Mohrenschildt was far away from Dallas too, managing his “business ventures” in Haiti. According to the record, de Mohrenschildt and Oswald had no contact during the prior six months.

It was this hiatus, and de Mohrenschildt’s physical absence from the United State, that enabled the Warren Commission to discount his otherwise glaring relationships with Oswald and Oswald’s pre-assassination “handlers” in Dallas. Not to mention his many links to members of the Texas Raj, who were noted for their anti-Kennedy animus and extensive ties to the national intelligence apparatus.

One curious matter concerns some communications about de Mohrenschildt in June 1963, between the Republic National Bank in Dallas and Brown Brothers Harriman in New York – where ex-senator Prescott Bush had just resumed work as a senior partner. The date is important because it is just after de Mohrenschildt leaves for Haiti.

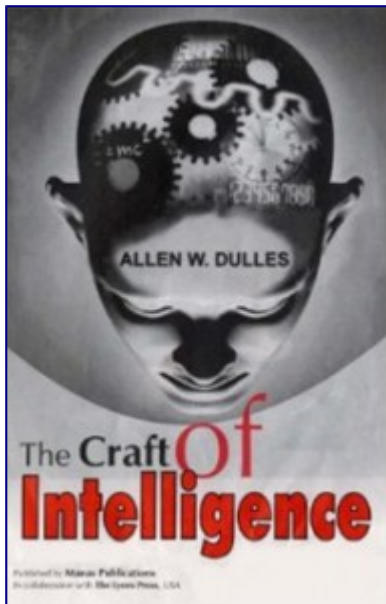
The communications, revealed in an FBI agent’s report of 1964, appear odd. As it is presented, a confidential client of Brown Brothers, “a firm dealing in the import and export of fibers,” had made a credit inquiry “concerning George de Mohrenschildt.” Brown Brothers had replied that it knew nothing of him, but forwarded the inquiry to Republic National Bank, whose “report was favorable concerning

de Mohrenschildt's credit.”

Why this confidential client would ask a bank in New York about a man based in Texas – and this bank in particular – is not made clear. The thread, or fiber, tying this mini-episode to the larger unfolding drama is sisal. It gave yet more prominent people – including top officials at Republic National Bank and Prescott Bush at Brown Brothers Harriman – the same cover story it provided to everyone else: if anyone discovered that they had been dealing with de Mohrenschildt, they could claim that their sole motive was to make money off Haitian sisal.

The coincidences mount. After his dismissal as director of the CIA, Allen Dulles had written a book called *The Craft of Intelligence* – with the assistance of E. Howard Hunt. As might be expected, it was hardly a tell-all exposé. Reviewers were generally unimpressed, especially with the innocuous anecdotes. “It is a book that could as well have been written from an outside, as from an inside, view,” wrote one critic.

The book did, however, give Dulles a reason to remain in the public eye – including a visit to Dallas in late October 1963. Although excerpts had been published, most notably in *Harper's*, starting at the beginning of the year, *The Craft of Intelligence* was held for release until the fall.



This version was published in 2007.

Dulles appears to have made no book-related appearances outside the Washington-New York corridor except for Dallas, to which he traveled at the invitation of Neil Mallon to speak at the Council on World Affairs. The Dallas Council would certainly be a receptive audience. After all, it had been conceived, in Mallon's own words, along “the guidelines of central intelligence.”

This gives us Dulles in Dallas, scant weeks before the assassination; Al Ulmer, the foreign-based CIA coup expert, in Texas and visiting with Poppy Bush; E. Howard Hunt, top Dulles operative and covert operations specialist, said by his own son to have been in Dallas; and Poppy Bush in Dallas – until he leaves town either the night before or on the very day of the assassination and places his covering alibi phone call from Tyler, Texas.

Oswald's all-too-public “friend” George de Mohrenschildt is safely off on important business in Haiti, and D. Harold Byrd is off on a safari. Again, this scenario may mean nothing. It all may just be coincidence. But the confluences among this cast of characters are at the very least remarkable.

It does not take a hypercharged imagination to construe a larger story of which they might be part, or to wonder why these people might have gone to such lengths to create “deniability” concerning any connections to the events in Dallas – unless they had a connection.

Another salient fact is that, on the day of the assassination, Deputy Police Chief George L. Lumpkin was driving the pilot car of Kennedy’s motorcade, a quarter mile ahead of JFK’s vehicle. Lumpkin was a friend of Jack Crichton, Poppy Bush’s GOP colleague.

Like Crichton, moreover, he was a member of an Army Intelligence Reserve unit. (Lumpkin would later tell the House Select Committee on Assassination that he had been consulted by the Secret Service on motorcade security, and his input had eliminated an alternative route.) In the car with Lumpkin was another Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel George Whitmeyer, commander of all Army Reserve units in East Texas, who happened to be Jack Crichton’s boss in the Reserve.

Although Whitmeyer was not on the police list of those approved to ride in the pilot car, he had insisted that he be in the vehicle and remained there until the shooting. The only recorded stop made by the pilot car was directly in front of the Depository building. Lumpkin stopped briefly there and spoke to a policeman handling traffic at the corner of Houston and Elm.

To the right of the motorcade, in front of the grassy knoll, stood Abraham Zapruder with his camera, ready to capture the 8-millimeter short film that would make his name famous.



Russian émigré, Abraham Zapruder

The Zapruder film would be cited vigorously by both critics and supporters of the Warren Commission’s conclusions. As of late 2008, the latest attempt to back up the lone gunman theory was historian Max Holland’s twelve-years-in-the-making study of the assassination. Citing the Zapruder film, Holland argues that a careful study of it shows that Oswald actually fired the first shot earlier than previously calculated. This allows, according to Holland, enough time for Oswald to have gotten the second and third shots off before the car sped up. He says this new theory establishes that Oswald could have done it – and therefore indeed did do it, and did it alone. “If I restore faith in the Warren Commission,” Holland told the *Washington Post*, which published a highly sympathetic profile of the author, “I’ll put to rest some of the disturbing questions people have had.” Zapruder is widely characterized as an innocent bystander, simply an onlooker who happened to capture historic footage that would dominate the evidentiary debate. Innocent he may well have been, but hardly unknown in

Dallas intelligence circles.

It turns out that the short, bald recorder of history was also a former colleague of Mrs. de Mohrenschildt, who worked with her at Nardis when she first moved to Dallas. Zapruder also sat on the board of Neil Mallon's Dallas Council on World Affairs. Like numerous figures in this story, he had a propensity for groups built on loyalty and secrecy, having sustained the status of thirty-second-degree Freemason.

The film he would make on November 22 would soon be purchased by Henry Luce, a Skull and Bones colleague of Prescott Bush and a devotee of intelligence – whose wife, Clare Booth Luce, had personally funded efforts to overthrow Castro. Henry Luce had warned that JFK would be punished if he went soft on Communism. After quickly purchasing the original Zapruder film, Luce's *Life* magazine kept it in lockdown until New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison successfully subpoenaed it in 1969.

At the moment that Kennedy's car passed the Stemmons Freeway sign on Elm Street, a man standing in front of the grassy knoll opened an umbrella and pumped it repeatedly above his head. Even the House Select Committee on Assassinations found it strange, given that it was a gloriously sunny day. Next to him was a man with a dark complexion who appeared to be speaking on a walkie-talkie shortly after shots were fired.



Frame 228 of the Zapruder film. Arrow points to opened umbrella.

In 1978, one Louis Steven Witt came forward to identify himself as the “Umbrella Man.” A self-described “conservative-type fellow,” Witt claimed that he had opened his umbrella repeatedly because a colleague had told him that the gesture would annoy the president. He did not elaborate on why anyone would have thought this.

In his testimony before the House Select Committee on Assassinations, he lamented that “if the Guinness Book of World Records had a category for people who were at the wrong place at the wrong time, doing the wrong thing, I would be No. 1 in that position, without even a close runner-up.” He also claimed to have no recollection of the dark-complexioned man, though photos show the two men speaking. Witt's curious and seemingly choreographed umbrella opening remains another question mark on a day full of perplexing coincidences.

Where Was Poppy? Part II

If indeed it can be established that Oswald was being guided to his destiny – either because he would become the shooter or because he would be framed for the shooting – then whoever was running him, and whoever was controlling Oswald's controller, were integral parts of a plot.

By now, we have enough information to show, fairly conclusively, that Oswald was being managed by Poppy's old friend de Mohrenschildt. We also have others connected with Poppy closely associated with the events of November 22. And we have Poppy creating an alibi for himself.

Details on who fired the gun, whose gun it was, and how many shots were fired from where remain relevant, but become of secondary importance. The central question is the story that lies behind these details. In summation, here's just some of the new, relevant information: Poppy Bush was closely tied to key members of the intelligence community including the deposed CIA head with a known grudge against JFK; he was also tied to Texas oligarchs who hated Kennedy's politics and whose wealth was directly threatened by Kennedy; this network was part of the military/intelligence elite with a history of using assassination as an instrument of policy. Poppy Bush was in Dallas on November 21 and most likely the morning of November 22. He hid that fact, he lied about knowing where he was, then he created an alibi based on a lead he knew was false. And he never acknowledged the closeness of his relationship with Oswald's handler George de Mohrenschildt. Poppy's business partner Thomas Devine met with de Mohrenschildt during that period, on behalf of the CIA. Poppy's eventual Texas running mate in the 1964 election, Jack Crichton, was connected to the military intelligence figures who led Kennedy's motorcade. Crichton and D. Harold Byrd, owner of the Texas School Book Depository Building, were both connected to de Mohrenschildt – and directly to each other through oil-business dealings. Byrd brought in the tenant that hired Oswald shortly before the assassination. Oswald got his job in the building through a friend of de Mohrenschildt's with her own intelligence connections – including family ties to Allen Dulles.

Even Jack Ruby's slaying of Oswald fits the larger pattern seen here – one in which Oswald is indeed a "patsy" – a pawn in a deadly game who would never be permitted to say what he knew.

Ruby himself practically admitted as much. After his trial, he made a statement to reporters as to his motives in shooting Oswald, and essentially admitted to a conspiracy.

RUBY: Everything pertaining to what's happening has never come to the surface. The world will never know the true facts, of what occurred, my motives. The people had, that had so much to gain and had such an ulterior motive for putting me in the position I'm in, will never let the true facts come above board to the world.

REPORTER: Are these people in very high positions, Jack?

RUBY: Yes.

As with so many events in his life, Poppy had been very careful about November 22, 1963. Thanks to the Kiwanis lunch, Barbara's letter, and the Parrott phone call, he could reasonably claim to have been "out of the loop," even while people he knew certainly appear to have very much been in it – or far too close for comfort. In any case, as we shall see in the next chapter, there was still more to the story.



Bush and the JFK Hit, Part 10: After Camelot

By Russ Baker

Nov 20, 2013

*What possible connection could there have been between George H.W. Bush and the assassination of John F. Kennedy? Or between the C.I.A. and the assassination? Or between Bush and the C.I.A.? For some people, apparently, making such connections was as dangerous as letting one live wire touch another. Here, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the JFK assassination in November, is the **tenth** and final part of a series of excerpts from WhoWhatWhy editor Russ Baker's bestseller, [Family of Secrets: The Bush Dynasty, America's Invisible Government and the Hidden History of the Last Fifty Years](#). The story is a real-life thriller.*

Note: Although these excerpts do not contain footnotes, the book itself is heavily footnoted and exhaustively sourced. (The excerpts in Part 10 come from Chapter 7 of the book, and the titles and subtitles have been changed for this publication.)



For Part 1, please go [here](#); Part 2, [here](#); Part 3, [here](#); Part 4, [here](#); Part 5, [here](#); Part 6, [here](#); Part 7, [here](#); Part 8, [here](#); Part 9, [here](#).

Jack Crichton, Stage Manager

If Poppy Bush was busy on November 22, 1963, so was his friend Jack Crichton. Bush's fellow GOP candidate was a key figure in a web of military intelligence figures with deep connections to the Dallas Police Department – and as previously noted, to the pilot car of JFK's motorcade.

Crichton came back into the picture within hours of Kennedy's death and the subsequent arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald, when a peculiar cordon sanitaire went up around Marina Oswald. The first to her side was Republican activist and precinct chairman Ilya Mamantov, a vociferous anti-Communist who frequently lectured in Dallas on the dangers of the Red menace.

When investigators arrived, Mamantov stepped up as interpreter and embellished Marina's comments to establish in no uncertain terms that the "leftist" Lee Harvey Oswald had been the gunman – the lone gunman – who killed the president.

It is interesting of course that the Dallas police would let an outsider – in particular, a right-wing Russian émigré – handle the delicate interpreting task. Asked by the Warren Commission how this happened, Mamantov said that he had received a phone call from Deputy Police Chief George Lumpkin. After a moment's thought, Mamantov then remembered that just preceding Lumpkin's call he had heard from Jack Crichton.

It was Crichton who had put the Dallas Police Department together with Mamantov and ensured his place at Marina Oswald's side at this crucial moment.

Despite this revelation, Crichton almost completely escaped scrutiny. The Warren Commission never interviewed him. Yet, as much as anyone, Crichton embodied a confluence of interests within the oil-intelligence-military nexus. And he was closely connected to Poppy in their mutual efforts to advance the then-small Texas Republican Party, culminating in their acceptance of the two top positions on the

state's Republican ticket in 1964.



Jack Crichton

During World War II, Crichton had served in the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA. Postwar, he began working for the company of petroleum czar Everette DeGolyer and was soon connected in petromilitary circles at the highest levels. A review of hundreds of corporate documents and newspaper articles shows that when Crichton left DeGolyer's firm in the early fifties he became involved in an almost incomprehensible web of companies with overlapping boards and ties to DeGolyer. Many of them were backed by some of North America's most powerful families, including the Du Ponts of Delaware and the Bronfmans, owners of the liquor giant Seagram.

Crichton was so plugged into the Dallas power structure that one of his company directors was Clint Murchison Sr., king of the oil depletion allowance, and another was D. Harold Byrd, owner of the Texas School Book Depository building.



Clint Murchison Sr.

A typical example of this corporate cronyism came in 1952, when Crichton was part of a syndicate – including Murchison, DeGolyer, and the Du Ponts – that used connections in the fascist Franco regime to acquire rare drilling rights in Spain. The operation was handled by Delta Drilling, which was owned by Joe Zeppa of Tyler, Texas – the man who transported Poppy Bush from Tyler to Dallas on November 22, 1963.

It was in 1956 that the bayou-bred Crichton started up his own spy unit, the 488th Military Intelligence Detachment. He would serve as the intelligence unit's only commander through November 22, 1963, continuing until he retired from the 488th in 1967, at which time he was awarded the Legion of Merit and cited for "exceptionally outstanding service."

Gimme Shelter



Besides his oil work and his spy work, the disarmingly folksy Crichton wore a third hat. He was an early and central figure in an important Dallas institution that is virtually forgotten today: the city's Civil Defense organization. Launched in the early 1950s as cold war hysteria grew, it was a centerpiece of a kind of officially sanctioned panic response that, like the response to September 11, 2001, had a potential to serve other agendas.

So avid and extensive was the Dallas civil defense effort that the conservative radio commentator Paul Harvey singled it out for special praise in his syndicated column in September 1960: "The Communists, since 1917, have sold Communism to more people than have been told about Christ after 2,000 years," Harvey wrote, a sentiment common in rightist circles of the era.

But they got their converts one at a time. You and I can 'convert' two others to become militant Americans this week . . . That's precisely the nature of the counterattack that has been mounted in Dallas.

Early in 1961, Crichton was the moving force behind a cold war readiness program called "Know Your Enemy," which focused on the Communist intention to destroy the American way of life. In October 1961, Dallas mayor Earle Cabell introduced a short documentary *Communist Encirclement – 1961*. Afterward, the *Dallas Morning News* wrote that the Channel 8 switchboard was "flooded . . . with calls from viewers lauding the program, which deals frankly with Communist infiltration."

So great was the sense of alarm that at the 1961 Texas State Fair in Dallas, 350 people per hour made their way through an exhibitor's bomb shelter.



In April 1, 1962, Dallas Civil Defense, with Crichton heading its intelligence component, opened an elaborate underground command post under the patio of the Dallas Health and Science Museum. Because it was intended for “continuity-of-government” operations during an attack, it was fully equipped with communications equipment.

With this shelter in operation on November 22, 1963, it was possible for someone based there to communicate with police and other emergency services. There is no indication that the Warren Commission or any other investigative body or even JFK assassination researchers looked into this facility or the police and Army Intelligence figures associated with it.

On November 22, Crichton suggested Mamantov to the police department as the ideal person to interpret for Marina. His basis for knowing this was that in his role in military intelligence he maintained surveillance of Russians in Dallas, working closely in this regard with the police department.

Marina’s statements through Mamantov would play a crucial role in starting a chain of events that could have led to a U.S. missile strike on Cuba. In the hours following Kennedy’s assassination, the Dallas Police Department passed along information purportedly gleaned from Marina Oswald that suggested possible ties between her husband and the government of Cuba.

Though the information would turn out to be wrong, it was quickly passed to Army Intelligence, which then passed it along to the U.S. Strike Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, the unit that would have directed an attack on the island had someone ordered it in those chaotic first hours after Kennedy’s death. That this sequence of events took place is confirmed by the original Army cable from military intelligence in Texas, declassified a decade later. What is not clear is how close matters ever got to zero hour.

A key element in this tangled tale is the little-appreciated overlap between the Dallas Police Department and Army Intelligence. As Crichton, who has since died, would reveal in a little-noted oral history in 2001, there were “about a hundred men in that unit and about forty or fifty of them were from the Dallas Police Department.”

Thus Crichton was a crucial figure linking many seemingly disparate elements: military intelligence, local police, the GOP, the White Russians, the oil community, George de Mohrenschildt, and Poppy Bush.



The Kennedys having coffee, unaware of what was brewing in Dallas.

The Poppy and Jack Show

In the fall of 1963, about two months before JFK's assassination, the two political neophytes Jack Crichton and George H.W. Bush both decided to mount GOP races for statewide office. The following year, they would head the Texas GOP's ticket, with Crichton the nominee for governor and Bush for U.S. Senate. Both used the same lawyer, Pat Holloway, who worked out of the Republic National Bank Building.

The man who recruited them as candidates, state GOP chairman Peter O'Donnell, would several years later be forced by newspaper revelations to admit that his family foundation was a conduit for CIA funds.

Thus in November 1963, Bush and Crichton were essentially working in tandem. Given that alliance, Poppy would need to explain not only where he was on November 22 and why he tried so hard to hide that, but also what he knew about Crichton's activities that day and about Crichton's Army Intelligence colleagues in the pilot car of the motorcade.

In his oral history, Crichton couches his relationship with Bush in benign and casual terms. He says that he and Poppy "spoke from the same podiums and got to be fairly good acquaintances." Their appearances on behalf of the Texas Republican Party evolved into a private friendship that continued over the years. "When he was head of the CIA, I called him one day and I said, 'George, I'm coming to Washington, would you have time to play tennis?' And he said 'Yeah.' He said, 'How would you like to play at The White House?' And I said 'Man, that'd be a real deal.' So he said, 'Well, I'll have you a partner.'

A Crime of Commission

The Warren Commission's official mandate had been to conduct "a thorough and independent investigation" of the assassination. However, along with subsequent investigative bodies, it failed to assemble, much less connect, even the most obvious of dots. Virtually everybody on the commission was a friend of Nixon's or LBJ's – or both.

The members shared another characteristic: they were, almost without exception, from the conservative establishment and definitely not Kennedy admirers who would have gone to any length to find the truth

about JFK's death. Along with Allen Dulles, members included Republican congressman Gerald Ford and John J. McCloy, a top operative for the Rockefeller family.

No doubt coincidentally, McCloy had been best man at the wedding of Henry Brunie, head of Empire Trust, which employed Jack Crichton and invested in de Mohrenschildt's Cuban oil project.

Transcripts of the panel discussions produce a sense that the commission members and investigators were either incredibly naïve or else walking on eggshells. At an early executive session, Earl Warren told his colleagues, "We can rely upon the reports of the various agencies . . . the FBI, the Secret Service, and others."

But commission member Senator Richard Russell, a conservative Georgia Democrat who headed the Armed Services Committee on which his friend Prescott Bush had served, made at least a brief stand.

"I hope," he said, "that you'll get someone with a most skeptical nature, sort of a devil's advocate, who would take this FBI report and this CIA report and go through it and analyze every soft spot and contradiction in it, just as if he were prosecuting them."

Many were already wondering whether CIA personnel might themselves know something about the assassination and how helpful they would be to the investigation. In one executive session, Russell turned to Dulles and expressed his doubts about Dulles's compatriots:

I think you've got more faith in them [the CIA] than I have. I think they'll doctor anything they hand to us.

During the commission's investigation, Dulles and his colleagues sometimes traveled to Dallas, especially to hear witnesses who could not come to Washington. When they did, they set up their temporary conference room in the boardroom of the Republic National Bank. The decision to do so is revealing, if nothing else than of a striking lack of concern for appearances.

The Republic National Bank board was wired into the heart of the anti-Kennedy elite. The bank building itself stood out from other Dallas towers as an important symbol: the headquarters of Dresser Industries and of a number of corporations, law firms, and trusts connected with the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as being the building in which de Mohrenschildt himself had had offices.

A Fascinating Tan

Members of the commission were often absent during testimony. But George de Mohrenschildt's appearance caused a stir. Among those present were Dulles, Ford, McCloy, and two commission attorneys. As de Mohrenschildt would recall in an early draft of his un-published memoirs:

The late Allen W. Dulles, former head of CIA, and a scholarly looking man, was there. He was, by the way, a friend of Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss [Jackie Kennedy's mother] and he came over to talk to us amicably . . . What amazed me, looking backward at my testimony, was that whatever good I said about Lee Harvey Oswald seemed to be taken with a grain of salt as if the decision regarding his guilt had already been formed.

Commission assistant counsel Albert E. Jenner Jr. was the staffer who conducted the interrogations of George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt, which lasted two and a half days.

As he did with several other key witnesses, Jenner had private conversations with George de Mohrenschildt both inside and outside the hearing room. Perhaps to ensure that he would not be accused of something underhanded, he went out of his way to state the fact of those outside consultations for the record. Aside from asking de Mohrenschildt, on the record, to verify that everything they had discussed privately was reiterated in the public session, Jenner never made clear what the subject matter of those private conversations was.



Albert Jenner

The transcript of the de Mohrenschildts' testimony runs 165 pages. It reveals George to be a remarkably interesting, dynamic character, whose life resembled that of a fictional adventurer. But numerous points of his testimony, especially relating to his background and connections, cried out for further scrutiny. Instead, Jenner consistently demonstrated that he was either incompetent or deliberately incurious when it came to learning anything useful about de Mohrenschildt.

To wit, here is an exchange between Jenner and de Mohrenschildt, in Washington, on April 22, 1964, with a historian, Dr. Alfred Goldberg, present. Jenner, who had already read extensive FBI reports on de Mohrenschildt, could be forceful when he wanted answers. But most of his moves were away from substance. He seemed determined to reach the commission's conclusion that de Mohrenschildt was a "highly individualistic person of varied interests," and nothing more. In fact, Jenner stonewalled so assiduously that even de Mohrenschildt registered amazement:

MR. JENNER: You are 6'1", are you not?

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: Yes.

MR. JENNER: And now you weigh, I would say, about 195?

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: That is right.

MR. JENNER: Back in those days you weighed around 180.

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: That is right.

MR. JENNINGS: You are athletically inclined?

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: That is right.

MR. JENNINGS: And you have dark hair.

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: No gray hairs yet.

MR. JENNER: And you have a tanned – you are quite tanned, are you not?

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: Yes, sir.

MR. JENNER: And you are an outdoorsman?

MR. DE MOHRENSCHILDT: Yes. I have to tell you – I never expected you to ask me such questions.

Why was Jenner even on the commission staff? Chairman Warren offered an oblique justification for his hiring that perhaps was more revealing than the chief justice intended. He was a "lawyer's lawyer," Warren said, and a "businessman's lawyer" who had gotten good marks from a couple of unnamed individuals.

Commission member John McCloy timidly inquired whether they shouldn't hire people with deep experience in criminal investigations. "I have a feeling that maybe somebody who is dealing with government or federal criminal matters would be useful in this thing."

Warren then implied that this was unnecessary because the attorney general (Robert Kennedy) and FBI director (J. Edgar Hoover) would be involved, totally ignoring the strong personal stakes of both officials in the outcome – and the strong animosity between them. Allen Dulles said little during this discussion of Jenner.

Albert Jenner, Company Man

Albert Jenner was truly a curious choice for the commission staff. He was fundamentally a creature of the anti-Kennedy milieu – a corporate lawyer whose principal work was defending large companies against government trust-busting (which came under the aegis of the slain president's brother Robert). His partner specialized in trust accounts on behalf of the super-rich.

Jenner's most important client was Chicago financier Henry Crown, who was the principal shareholder in General Dynamics, then the nation's largest defense contractor and a major employer in the Fort Worth area. The bottom line is that the Warren commission did not assign a seasoned criminal investigator to figure out de Mohrenschildt's relationship with Oswald and his larger circle of connections. Instead, they turned the job over to a man whose principal experience and loyalties were firmly planted in the very circles most antagonistic to Kennedy.

The Warren Commission had been pressed to wrap up its inquiries quickly and neatly. But George de Mohrenschildt, whose wife described him as a man who didn't know how to shut up, was not always a compliant witness.

Commission transcripts contain some tantalizing admissions, which, in the hands of a determined truth-seeker, would have led to important revelations. But whenever de Mohrenschildt let something slip, Jenner would quickly push it aside. He'd even mix up dates, thus creating a hopelessly jumbled chronology of the de Mohrenschildts' lives.

Among the leads Jenner did not pursue was one from George Bouhe, the Russian community leader who had served as Oswald's first handler before passing him on to de Mohrenschildt. In his own testimony, Bouhe told Jenner that he had been wary of Oswald at first. He said he had even worried about attending an initial welcome dinner for the Oswalds thrown by Peter Paul Gregory, Oswald's first White Russian contact on returning from the USSR. So Bouhe called a lawyer friend, Max Clark, who happened to be married to a Russian princess, to ask his advice.

"And after a couple of days, I don't remember exactly Mr. Clark's answer, but there were words to the effect that since he was processed through the proper channels, apparently there is nothing wrong, but you have to be careful. I think these were the words. Then I accepted the invitation for dinner."

Jenner did not pursue what this reference to "proper channels" meant. And he did not then ask for more information on Max Clark. Not that he was likely to have needed the answer. Max Clark had previously been head of security for General Dynamics, Jenner's top client, and was aware of the Kennedy administration's ongoing investigation of the company.

De Mohrenschildt: Jackie's "Uncle George"

When the Warren commission released transcripts of its interviews with George de Mohrenschildt, the Associated Press remarked on the "strange coincidence," particularly that de Mohrenschildt was a friend of both Lee Harvey Oswald and the "family of President Kennedy." The latter assertion was not quite accurate. In fact, he was a friend of the family of President Kennedy's *wife*.

De Mohrenschildt had known Jackie's family since the late 1930s. During the summer following his arrival in the United States, he, his brother, and his sister-in-law, along with Poppy's Andover roommate Edward Hooker, headed for the Hooker summer cottage in Bellport, Long Island.

In Bellport they had some houseguests: Janet Bouvier and her daughter, the future Jacqueline Kennedy. A long-lasting friendship ensued. Jackie grew up calling de Mohrenschildt "Uncle George" and would sit on his knee. According to some accounts, de Mohrenschildt was at one point engaged to Jackie's aunt Michelle.

"We were very close friends," de Mohrenschildt explained to Jenner. "We saw each other every day. I met Jackie then, when she was a little girl. Her sister, who was still in the cradle practically. We were also very close friends of Jack Bouvier's sister, and his father."

This revelation seemed not to interest Jenner, who snapped, "Well, bring yourself along."

Though Jenner did not find the Jackie Kennedy coincidences even remotely interesting, her own mother did. After the assassination, when de Mohrenschildt wrote Mrs. Auchincloss, offering his condolences, she wrote back:

It seems extraordinary to me, that you knew Oswald and that you knew Jackie as a child. It is certainly a very strange world.

So close were de Mohrenschildt and Jackie's family that even after the assassination, Oswald's friend was still welcome in the Auchincloss home. Indeed, immediately after their Warren Commission depositions concluded, George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt had dinner with Mrs. Auchincloss and her current husband, Hugh. There, de Mohrenschildt would later recall, "The overwhelming opinion was that Lee was the sole assassin . . . I tried to reason – to no avail."

Jeanne de Mohrenschildt added her recollections of that evening;

Well, the one thing struck me [was that] Mrs. Auchincloss . . . didn't want any investigation, she didn't want to know who killed Jack, why and what for. All she kept telling me was that Jack is dead and nothing will bring him back . . . I couldn't possibly understand how the person, a woman, being so close to the man that was so . . . killed so horribly, having no interest whatsoever to continue the investigation and finding a person who did it.

This story should be taken with a grain of salt. The de Mohrenschildts might have been self-serving in casting themselves as more interested than Jackie's mother in getting at the truth. Still, if they accurately characterized her preferences, Mrs. Auchincloss's lack of interest in getting to the bottom of things is striking.

In any case, at the end of the dinner, according to the de Mohrenschildts, Janet Auchincloss informed the couple that, because of the awkward circumstances, Jackie never wanted to see them again. No reason was given.

Did Jackie believe that the de Mohrenschildts knew something, or were even in some way involved? Or was she just concerned for appearances?

Regardless, the simple fact that de Mohrenschildt knew Jackie and was the central figure in the life of the man believed to have assassinated Jackie's husband surely deserved more attention. That the Kennedy marriage had never been as happy as the public was given to believe, that it had deteriorated badly in the last few years, and that Jackie had gone off, over White House objections, to spend time on the yacht of Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis – these did not necessarily add up to anything meaningful.

That Onassis, who was seriously at odds with Bobby Kennedy, had nearly entered into a Haitian

investment venture with George de Mohrenschildt may have been no more than coincidence.

Nor does the Bush-Hooker-Bouvier-de Mohrenschildt interweave mean anything in and of itself. But a credible investigation into the assassination of a president would necessarily have probed more deeply into all these matters. Yet a credible investigation is precisely what the Warren Commission wasn't.

There is yet another piece still to this maddening puzzle. It turns out that at least one other guest joined the Auchincloss-de Mohrenschildt dinner that night following the commission depositions: Allen Dulles.



Allen Dulles and Jackie Kennedy's mother, Janet Auchincloss, October 1961

Poppy's Moment

Although the mysteries behind the Kennedy assassination were not resolved by the Warren Commission, the rest of the world began to move on. Certainly, Poppy did. Though he lost the 1964 Senate election – as did his friend Jack Crichton the governor's race – Poppy had helped set in motion events that would get him to Washington in two short years.

Bush wanted to carve out a new congressional district from that of Representative Albert Thomas, a new Deal Democrat who had played a key role in bringing NASA's Space Center to Houston. By the time of Kennedy's assassination, Thomas was showing signs of early senility. A key reason for President Kennedy's visit to Texas that fateful week was to attend an event honoring Thomas, and generally to boost Democratic prospects for 1964.

In a watershed moment, Poppy and the GOP won a lawsuit they had filed in the fall of 1963 to force the state of Texas to redraw its gerrymandered congressional districts. This victory would play an important role in the state's gradual shift from the Democratic to the Republican column, which would affect the balance of power in American politics for decades to come. Moreover, it would pave the way for Poppy's election to the House of Representatives, and later his son's political rise.

One specific result of Poppy Bush's suit was the drawing of a "super-Republican" district tailor-made for him. Many of the people who lived there were East Coast trans-plants like Poppy himself, Ivy League graduates for whom tennis and martinis were a more natural choice than horseshoes and tequila. Poppy had done especially well in that area in his Senate race. So in 1966, Poppy sold his shares in Zapata Offshore, left the company in the hands of trusted associates, ran hard, won, and

headed for Washington.

The Phoenix Program: “Pacification” of 20,000 People

Congress was a great place for a spy – even better, in some ways, than the CIA. Congressmen were expected to travel the world, looking into matters of interest to the United States. In December 1967, less than a year after Bush was sworn in, he was off to Indochina, with his CIA partner Thomas Devine in tow.

It was Christmas break, a time when congressmen often make overseas trips, but Bush and Devine did not have a typical agenda. Correspondence indicates that having arrived in Vietnam, Bush and Devine hastily canceled an appointment with the U.S. ambassador in favor of other, unstated activities.

For the CIA, the hot item at the time was the so-called Phoenix Program, a secret plan to imprison and “neutralize” suspected Vietcong. This was being rolled out at precisely the moment that Poppy and Devine arrived “in country.”

By the time CIA director William Colby admitted to the program in July 1971, more than twenty thousand people had been killed – many of them possibly innocent, officials later concluded. One person involved in Phoenix’s early stages was Felix Rodriguez, a Cuban exile and CIA operative. Rodriguez would go on to become a great friend of Poppy Bush’s, even visiting him in the White House.



William Colby

If J. Edgar Hoover’s 1963 memo was correct in mentioning “George Bush of the CIA” as an intermediary with Cuban exiles, the coincidence of Rodriguez’s activities in Vietnam with that of Bush’s visit raises questions as to how the two were connected.

In 1970 Rodriguez joined the CIA front company Air America, which allegedly played a role in trafficking heroin from Laos to the United States. The Laotian operation was led by Donald Gregg, who would later serve as national security adviser during Poppy Bush’s presidency.

When Bush and Devine traveled to Vietnam the day after Christmas 1967, Devine was in his new CIA capacity, operating under commercial cover. Handwritten notes from the trip show that Poppy was especially interested in the Phoenix program, which he referred to by the euphemism “pacification.”

The two remained in Vietnam until January 11, 1968. Whatever information they were seeking, they left just in time. Only three weeks after the freshman congressman from Texas and his CIA sidekick departed Saigon, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong launched the massive Tet Offensive.

A Disturbing Incident

Meanwhile, the Kennedy assassination had put into the White House Lyndon Baines Johnson, who had

a long-standing but little-known relationship with the Bush family.

This dates back at least to 1953, when Prescott Bush joined Johnson in the U.S. Senate. Johnson was the powerful majority leader and Prescott had his own pipeline to the highest levels at the Eisenhower White House. That same year, Poppy Bush started Zapata Petroleum with Hugh and William Liedtke, who as law students at the University of Texas several years earlier had rented LBJ's guesthouse. Later, Bush became close with LBJ's chief financiers, George and Herman Brown, the founders of the construction giant Brown and Root (which later became part of Halliburton).

Pat Holloway, former attorney to both Poppy Bush and Jack Crichton, recounted to me an incident involving LBJ that had greatly disturbed him. This was around one p.m. on November 22, 1963, just as Kennedy was being pronounced dead. Holloway was heading home from the office and was passing through the reception area. The switchboard operator excitedly noted that she was patching the vice president through from Parkland Hospital to Holloway's boss, firm senior partner Waddy Bullion, who was LBJ's personal tax lawyer. The operator invited Holloway to listen in. LBJ was talking "not about a conspiracy or about the tragedy," Holloway recalled.

I heard him say, "Oh, I gotta get rid of my goddamn Halliburton stock." Lyndon Johnson was talking about the consequences of his political problems with his Halliburton stock at a time when the president had been officially declared dead. And that pissed me off . . . It really made me furious.

There are many other examples of LBJ's apparent unconcern after the assassination, though none so immediate. For instance, on the evening of November 25, LBJ and Martin Luther King talked, and LBJ said, "It's just an impossible period – we've got a budget coming up."

That morning, he told Joe Alsop that "the president must not inject himself into, uh, local killings," to which Alsop immediately replied, "I agree with that, but in this case it does happen to be the killing of the President."

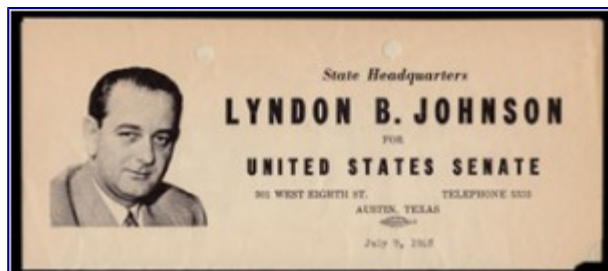
Also on the same day LBJ told Hoover, "We can't be checking up on every shooting scrape in the country."



In the back seat, Lyndon Johnson, November 23, 1963

By 1964, with LBJ in the White House and Poppy Bush the Texas GOP nominee for U.S. Senate, their relationship was highly cordial. An intriguing, if oblique, note from LBJ's assistant Leslie Carpenter to Walter Jenkins, a top LBJ adviser, dated August 14, 1964, referred to Poppy: "Someone may like to know that George Bush was in town today for the day . . . [Bush] also had a press conference. During it, he carefully refrained from saying anything critical of the President."

LBJ has also been plausibly characterized as secretly rooting for Bush to beat the liberal Democratic candidate for Senate, Ralph Yarborough, whom LBJ disliked greatly; since the Democrats held a solid two-third majority in the Senate, LBJ knew that his party could afford to lose the seat. In any case, while in Washington, Poppy had a warm relationship with Johnson, notwithstanding Bush's persistent attacks on the Democratic Party, especially back in Texas. One of the more peculiar relationships in an already bizarre enterprise resulted from Bush's choice of a surrogate to run Zapata Offshore's office in Medellín, Colombia. To begin with, there was the question of why a small, unprofitable company needed such far-flung outposts. Why, in particular, did it need one in Medellín, 150 miles from any offshore drilling locale – a city whose very name would later become synonymous with the cocaine trade? Bush's choice to represent Zapata in Colombia was Judge Manuel B. Bravo, of Zapata County, Texas.



Judge Bravo's singular claim to fame was his role in Lyndon Johnson's fraud-ridden election to the U.S. senate in 1948. As reports of an extraordinarily close race came in on election night, Bravo continually revised upward the Johnson count from Zapata County's Ballot Box 13 until LBJ was assured victory. A federal investigation led to a trial, but by that time the ballots from Box 13 in Jim Wells County had conveniently disappeared from the judge's office. The lack of evidence effectively ended Johnson's peril. Johnson won by eighty-seven votes. In 1967, President Johnson sent Poppy a note wishing him a happy birthday. The following year, LBJ's decision not to seek reelection paved the way for Richard Nixon's ascent to the presidency – and Nixon's steady sponsorship of Poppy Bush's own ascent to power. When Nixon was inaugurated in 1969, Bush took the unusual step of leaving the GOP festivities to see LBJ off at the airport. Soon thereafter, he was a guest at the LBJ ranch. There is no public record of what the two men talked about. Certainly, it had been a tumultuous few years for America, and busy ones for Poppy. His astonishing ability to carry on parallel lives, one visible, one deeply hidden, continued undiminished. But soon, there would be an understudy: his namesake, George W. Bush.

JFK II - The Bush Connection (2003) VIDEO BELOW

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JFK Assassination - 50 Reasons For 50 Years - Episode 49 VIDEO BELOW

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JFK: The Case For Conspiracy Part (1) VIDEO BELOW

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The Men Who Killed Kennedy Part 1 "The Coup D'etat" Complete VIDEO BELOW

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